IOWA BIRD LIFE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

Winter 2006 . Volume 76 . Number 1

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Meet an Iowa Birder — Bob Anderson

Bruce Ehresman

Bob Anderson with Peregrine Falcon. Photo by Larry Stone, Elkader, IA.

For anyone meeting Bob Anderson for the first time, you might notice he seems a bit shy and quiet. But just mention the word peregrine and his eyes light up. He is ready to engage in his favorite conversation topic, Peregrine Falcons.

Bob was born on Thanksgiving Day, 23 November 1950 in Lakeland, Minnesota. He comes from a large family, with four brothers and six sisters. When he was five or six years old, his family moved to White Bear Lake, Minnesota where he grew up and later graduated from high school. Bob attended college at the University of Minnesota and four other colleges before deciding he needed to pay off some college loans. He moved to Hugo, Minnesota and began working for 3M at St. Paul.

Bob said that he developed an early fascination for birds, especially birds of prey. This really began when he was nine years old and on summer vacation in Mountain Home, Idaho. He was walking down a street when he came upon a man who was standing on his front door stoop holding a falcon. The man was a falconer. "I can just recall a singular magnificence about that falcon." It was at that moment that Bob became transfixed on the idea of flying a trained falcon, the beginning of his long-term fascination.

While many kids were watching television during the 1950s and early 1960s, Bob explained that he spent a good deal of time reading encyclopedias, studying birds of prey and learning about falconry. He said that there really weren't any good books on the subject at that time. Bob felt that he was particularly influenced by an article written in the December 1920 issue of National Geographic. The article was ***Falconry, The Sport of Kings*** by Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Fuertes was an ornithologist, but he also was known as the nation's most notable ornithological painter since Audubon.

For a time, Bob also dabbled with raising psitticines, including parrots and macaws, but his main interest has been raptors. In 1973, he began experimenting with breeding peregrines in captivity. This is the same time that the Federal Endangered Species Act was passed and when all three North American peregrine races became protected. Unfortunately, by the time this act passed, perhaps as many as 350 nesting pairs of peregrines had been extirpated from the Mississippi River to the East Coast. In the eastern United States at Cornell University, Tom Cade and Jim Weaver already were experimenting with captive propagation of peregrines to reestablish them into the wild. Bob and

other falcon propagators modeled their peregrine breeding facilities after those built by Jim Weaver and the Peregrine Fund. While still working at 3M, Bob built four peregrine breeding chambers. With financial assistance from the Minnesota Nongame Program, Bob produced his first peregrine for release to the wild in 1983. Over the next 15 years, Bob would produce more than 250 peregrine young from his facilities at Hugo.

Today, breeding Peregrine Falcons in captivity has become an artful science. Not so in the early days, according to Bob. He said that there was much trial and error and much anguish, as falconers did their best to openly exchange information about what captive breeding techniques worked and which ones did not. Bob explains that back then there were no good books yet written about rearing captive peregrines.

When asked which of the peregrines he raised was most memorable, Bob unhesitatingly said, "MF-1." He and his son, Jeremy, together raised that particular bird in their living room. It turns out that MF-1 is one of the most famous of Midwest peregrines. In 1987, she nested at the Multifoods Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota and was the first peregrine to successfully produce young in the Midwest in about 25 years. In recognition of his successful restoration efforts with peregrines, the state of Minnesota named Bob the Conservationist of the Year for 1987.

During 1990, Bob left his job at 3M to raise and release Peregrine Falcons full-time. That same year, partly to increase financial support for peregrine breeding efforts, Bob founded and became the acting director of the Raptor Resource Project. By 1995, he turned his efforts to restoring peregrines to their historical eyries on the cliffs of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. While early restoration efforts focused on urban peregrine releases, Bob's goal was to establish a population of peregrines that were independent of constant human intervention. He was inspired to pursue this goal by his deep fascination with the Peregrine Falcon and his desire to help pay back the debt society incurred with its near eradication of this noble species.

To pursue his dream of bringing peregrines back to their cliff-nesting heritage, in November 1996 Bob moved to Iowa and relocated his falcon breeding facilities to Ridgeway. Just ten miles south of the Iowa-Minnesota border, his new property location was adjacent to the high bluffs overlooking the Upper Iowa River near Bluffton — a great place to raise and release peregrines. To support his project, Bob cashed in all the stocks and Individual Retirement Accounts he had accumulated during his working years at 3M. He converted hog buildings into peregrine breeding chambers, and in 1997 began to realize his dream of hacking peregrines from cliffs.

Bob pioneered the techniques for peregrine falcon releases from river bluffs. He created hack boxes that were lined with rock to simulate natural cliff nest sites, imprinting the peregrine youngsters on rock surroundings so that after release they would someday return to nest on rock cliffs. In 1997, Bob produced and released four peregrines from his "rock box" atop the rocky bluffs along the Upper Iowa River at Bluffton. During 1998 through 1999, Bob and his assistants raised and released 18 more falcons from a Mississippi River bluff site at Effigy Mounds National Monument.

While trying to establish peregrine nesting on historical eyries on Mississippi River bluffs, Bob coordinated his efforts with the Ho-Chunk American Indian Nation. Knowing that several of these bluffs were sacred sites to them, it was Bob's intention to assure that the sacredness of these sites was recognized and addressed accordingly. He envisioned the return of nesting peregrines to these bluffs as a shared effort between American Indian and Euro-American cultures.

To assist Bob with his effort to restore peregrines to historic peregrine nesting areas of the Mississippi River, others were released at a rock quarry in Dubuque and at the Louisa generating plant south of Muscatine. He also initiated a Mississippi River Peregrine Falcon nest box program in an effort to bolster their numbers along the river by installing nest boxes 300 to 400 feet up on the sides of smokestacks, particularly at electricity generating stations. All of these efforts have paid off. Today, thanks largely to Bob's leadership, Peregrine Falcons are again nesting in the same Mississippi River bluff eyries last occupied by peregrines 40 to 50 years ago.

Bob says a highlight of his life has been the return of nesting peregrines to historical cliff eyries along the Mississippi River. But he says his biggest thrill has been to band peregrines at these cliffs with his heroes — the same people who banded peregrines on these cliffs 40 to 50 years ago, before the species was extirpated. Dan Berger, Jack Oar, Chuck Sindelar, and Jim Grier are four of his heroes, all well known names in the raptor world. Dan began banding peregrines along the Mississippi River in 1951 and was delighted to rappel down the cliff to again band peregrine babies at Maiden Rock, Wisconsin for the first time in 40 years. Bob said that sharing the excitement of this historical moment with the people who appreciated it most was truly an extraordinary event.

Besides being named Minnesota's 1987 Conservationist of the Year, Bob has received other recognition and awards. During his work with hacking peregrines from northeastern Iowa's cliff in 1997 and 1998, he was featured on Iowa Public Television's ***Living in Iowa*** program. For his outstanding and tireless work to return peregrines to Iowa bluffs of the Mississippi River, he received the Iowa Governor's Volunteer Award. More recently, Honorary President Jim Fowler presented Bob the 2002 Champions of Wildlife Award from Explorer's Club, an international professional society for explorers and field scientists. Bob received this honor for his selfless efforts as a conservationist and environmental educator, particularly related to his work with Peregrine Falcon restoration and his travels abroad in pursuit of knowledge about the peregrine and its history with humankind. Bob said that this award from the Explorer's Club was signed by several of his heroes, which made it that much more meaningful.

Some of the more memorable places Bob has traveled include the tropical rainforest on the border of Brazil/Guyana where he accompanied cinematographer, Neil Rettig, on a documentary expedition to film the Harpy Eagle. Not only were they able to film Harpy Eagles in the wild, they also witnessed a host of other tropical birds and wildlife. Another filming adventure on which Bob assisted Neil was an expedition to the United Arab Emirates, a country formed from the union of seven sovereign sheikhdoms about 35 years ago. This country's main sports include camel racing and falconry, and Bob said he was privileged to be able to fly falcons with the local residents, as well as meet several sheikhs. Two other memorable trips that Bob related involved visiting dense populations of cliff-nesting peregrines on England's coast and in southern France's Pyrenees Mountains.

While Bob has traveled widely, he says that he loves northeastern Iowa best, and it feels like home. Bob points out that he is particularly fond of the Upper Iowa River and its associated bluff lands, and he loves his nearby trout streams. An avid fly fisherman, he especially enjoys the quiet, near-pristine atmosphere he finds on an Iowa trout stream. He explains that during some days the loudest sound that can be heard is the rattling of a nearby Belted Kingfisher or the ker-plunk of a rock falling into the stream from an overhanging bluff. He said that kind of experience is hard to duplicate elsewhere, even in Colorado.

Presently, Bob works for the president of Xcel Energy. Excel is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company that practices environmental responsibility. Part of his work has been to take blood samples from nesting peregrines and their young at fossil-fuel burning utility sites to determine if these birds were accumulating heavy metals. Bob now monitors peregrine nest boxes beginning near the headwaters of the Mississippi River at Cohasset, Minnesota down to Cassville, Wisconsin. To date, he has banded at least 300 power plant nest-box peregrines, indeed an incredible accomplishment!

Besides being an active conservationist, Bob also is an effective environmental educator. He lectures at colleges and is often a speaker for environmental groups, schools, and environmental symposia and conferences. His impact on those in contact with him is huge. He has converted power-plant workers into conservationists and has inspired thousands of people to appreciate raptors. His website, <www.raptorresource.org>, had more than one million hits last year. Bob has web cameras set up at nests of Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Barn Owl, and Osprey, and his present project is mounting a camera on the backs of flying raptors so that viewers can look at the world from a raptor's aerial perspective.

When asked what nonraptorial birds he appreciates, Bob responded, perhaps not surprisingly, by saying that he is especially captivated by Loggerhead Shrikes — and he enjoys reading a book he purchased, ***Shrikes of the World***. He added that he really does appreciate observing and learning about a wide variety of birds, but it is obvious that his greatest passion is for peregrines.

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Iowa's Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project

Pat Schlarbaum

This report attempts to summarize the activities of a dedicated group of conservationists in the rejuvenation and return of Peregrine Falcons to Iowa. Dr. Harrison Bud Tordoff (Bell Museum of Natural History in St. Paul) and Dr. Pat Redig (The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota, St Paul) coordinated the Midwest Peregrine Falcon effort as part of the larger Midwestern and Great Lakes Regional Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan (Figures 1 and 2). Bud is a man of vision and his professional influence has greatly benefited all. Pat Redig's expertise as a falconer and veterinarian and his extreme dedication to bringing back peregrines has been invaluable to the cause. Laura Spess Jackson of Roseburg, Oregon wrote the Iowa Peregrine Falcon Recovery Plan in 1989 and led our initial recovery activities. We will be forever indebted to these leaders, and we want to convey our deepest appreciation for all their conservation efforts.

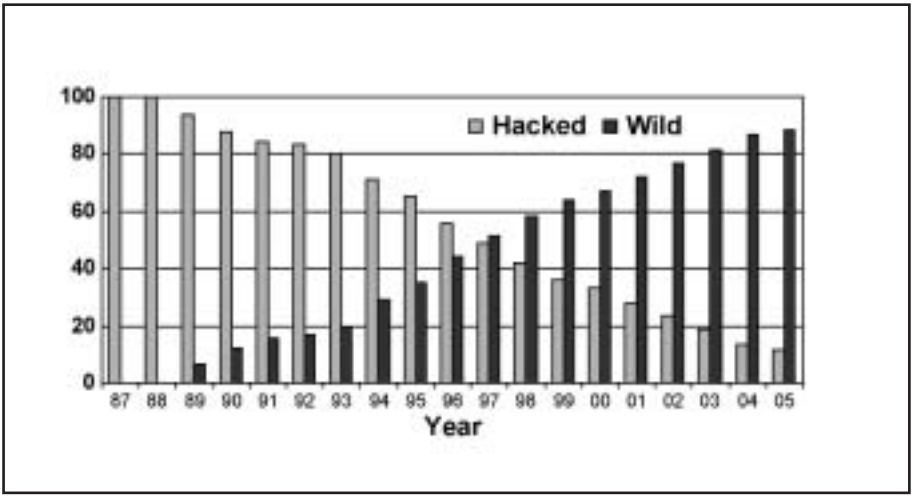

Figure 1. Hacked and wild Midwest Peregrine Falcon pairs, 1987–2005 (H.B. Tordoff, St. Paul, MN).

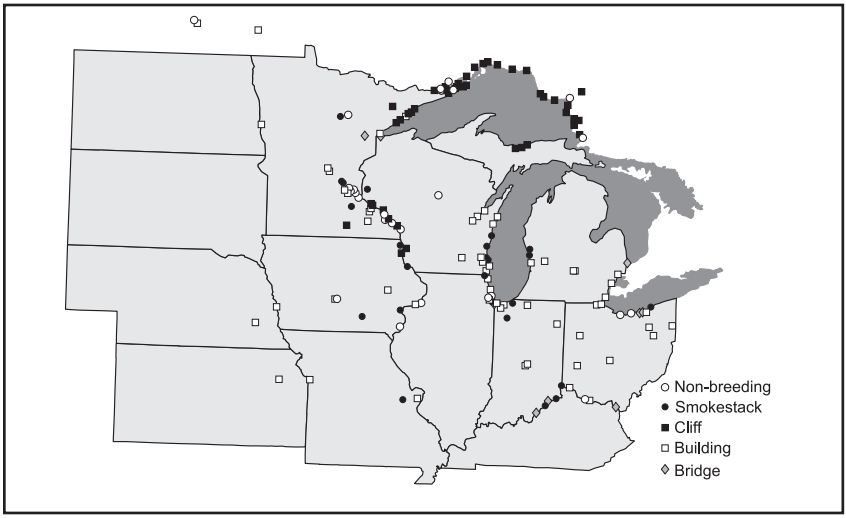

Figure 2. Origin of identified Peregrine Falcons nesting in the Midwest, 1987–2005 (H.B. Tordoff, St. Paul, MN).

Whether referred to as the great-footed hawk, a long wing, duck hawk, or rock hawk, the Peregrine Falcon (***Falco peregrinus***) occupies a unique position in our psyche of bird lore. The species was extirpated as a breeding bird from the eastern United States by 1964. In early 1960s, scientist and author of ***Silent Spring***, Rachel Carson, sounded an alarm, foretelling bird extinctions from ravaging biocides of the post-World War II era. Although the chemical industry demeaned and criticized Carson's research, a basic law of

nature was becoming obvious — whatever affects wildlife ultimately affects humans. Realization of a "Silent Spring" was resonating with a concerned public and legislation was needed to ban DDT and related chemical culprits. Fortunately, DDT and other organochlorine pesticides were banned for use in the United States in 1972, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was implemented in 1973. It was too late for peregrines that no longer nested east of the Missouri River, however, as these top-of-the-food-chain raptors and biological indicator species were mostly gone.

Tom Cade, the founder of The Peregrine Fund, initiated efforts to breed captive peregrines in the 1970s. A captive breeding facility originally located at Cornell University in New York was later relocated to Boise, Idaho. In conjunction, private falconers and breeders began producing peregrines for the recovery. Bob Anderson of Ridgeway, Iowa has devoted his entire livelihood to this effort. (See article about Bob Anderson on page 1 of this issue.) It is from the efforts of Anderson and other committed individuals and organizations credited below, that peregrines have reclaimed their place in Iowa's skies.

In the Midwest, peregrines formerly nested on cliffs along Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and the upper Mississippi River, plus suitable palisade areas. The upper Mississippi River area was the major historic nesting area for peregrines in the Midwest, with an estimated historic population of 30 to 35 pairs (Tordoff 1986). Most of Iowa's historic peregrine nesting occurred on the Mississippi River bluffs of northeastern Iowa in Allamakee, Clayton, Dubuque, and Clinton counties (Anderson 1907, Allert 1939, Pierce 1940), but nesting also occurred on the palisades of the Cedar River in Linn and Johnson Counties (Bailey 1902, 1918; Keyes 1906) and along the Cedar River in Black Hawk County (Anderson 1907). A nest was also reported at the mouth of Beaver Creek in Polk County (DuMont 1931). Prior to reintroduction, the last documented nests were noted in 1955 and 1956 at two of six eyries in Allamakee County (Berger and Mueller 1969), although there were reports of a nest with two eggs in Allamakee County in 1964 and a nest with downy young at Blackhawk Point, Allamakee County in 1967 (Roosa and Stravers 1989). Pesticides, specifically DDT, were the primary cause for the dramatic decline in the peregrine population. Until 1998, the peregrine was a federal- and state-listed endangered species. The bird was upgraded federally in 1998, but remains on Iowa's endangered species list.

In an effort to guide recovery of Peregrine Falcons in the eastern United States, an Eastern Peregrine Recovery Plan (EPRP) was developed in 1979. The overall goal of this plan was to establish a viable peregrine population consisting of 175 breeding pairs, which is half of the pre-pesticide population. For each region of the eastern United States, the EPRP set a goal of 20 to 25 breeding pairs. Iowa falls under the Midwestern and Great Lakes Regional Plan (MGLRP). Other states and territories of MGLRP are North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, South Dakota, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Manitoba, and Ontario. As part of the MGLRP, Iowa set a goal of establishing five breeding pairs by the year 2000 with an ultimate goal of ten breeding pairs for a viable population. To achieve this goal, the Wildlife Diversity Program planned to release 55 peregrines in the first five years. Release sites would be prepared to utilize falconry expertise.

HISTORY AND ROLE OF FALCONRY

The art of falconry had its inception in Mongolia and the Middle East more than four thousand years ago. The craft was introduced to Europeans during the medieval times of

the sixteenth century. The feudal system created sprawling castles that dominated higher elevations of the landscape. These structures and associated forest tracts attracted falcons including kestrels, Merlin's, and peregrines. A person's status in the hierarchy determined what falcon could be mastered; the higher the status, the more powerful falcon that could be possessed. Peregrines were the highest order that falconers could accompany on hunting forays.

Falconers use specific terminology in their craft to describe various activities with the birds. A released raptor is referred to as ***hacked*** and the release site is called a ***hack site***. Hatchling raptors are called ***eyases*** and their nest sites are referred to as ***eyries***. ***Fledgling*** peregrines have flown from the nest. Peregrine means ***wanderer*** in Latin and even young peregrines truly live up to their namesake. Peregrines fly far and wide with 300-mile daily flights documented. In pursuit of its prey, generally other birds, a peregrine folds its wings and becomes a projectile capable of speeds over 245 miles per hour. By knuckling its talons and clipping the prey, the quarry is stunned and driven to the ground. This phenomenal feat of speed and power is referred to as a ***stoop***.

Modern falconers also perfected the process of raising and releasing peregrines that were not imprinted on people. Breeding peregrine pairs in captivity produces hatchlings that are fed *Cotunix* quail. This food is high in protein and readily raised to feed the birds. At approximately 35 days, young eyases can tear apart prey without the aid of adults, and are placed in a hack structure. Humans feed the young peregrines, in such a manner so the birds do not imprint on humans. At approximately 42 days, the hack structure is opened and the young are free to come and go as passively as possible. Any drama at this stage may cause peregrines to bolt from the area. Humans supplement the peregrines' diet with quail for approximately a month, until they attain self-sufficiency.

Commencing in 1981 and proceeding through 1988, 208 peregrines were hacked in the Midwest, which included Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. In 1982, peregrines were hacked from a natural bluff near Weaver Dunes in southwestern Minnesota. Great Horned Owls readily preyed on fledglings and even surviving, adult peregrines at this site. It was determined that urban areas had minimal Great Horned Owl presence and most peregrines in the Midwest were released into urban environments until 1997. The first successful nesting in the Midwest since extirpation occurred in 1987 at Multifoods Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota. By 1988, six nesting pairs fledged 16 young in the Midwest. Three pairs were located in Minnesota, and one each in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio.

IOWA RESTORATION EFFORTS

Iowa's Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project began in 1989 with the release of 10 (2 female [F], 8 male [M]) birds in Cedar Rapids from the Telecom USA building. Key supporters of this initial release included Kirkwood Community College, Macbride Raptor Project, Cedar Rapids Audubon, and Iowa Falconers Association. Releases continued for the second year at the Cedar Rapids site with 13 peregrines (3F, 10M) in 1990.

In 1991, a second release site was selected for the third year of the project. A total of 19 birds (8F, 11M) were released that year from Elsie Mason Manor in downtown Des Moines. Peregrines were observed in Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and Keokuk; however, no nests were located. A second release was not attempted at Des Moines during 1992, because two peregrines attempted to nest on the American Republic Insurance building. The female, hacked at Kansas City in 1990, laid five eggs. One egg rolled off the alcove

ledge and another was cracked. The three remaining eggs were laid in a different alcove and never incubated. The male at this site was from the 1990 Cedar Rapids release. This was the first nesting attempt in Iowa in nearly 30 years.

Elsewhere in Iowa during 1992, peregrine pairs established two additional territories. A male peregrine in Cedar Rapids successfully attracted a mate in mid-May. The pair engaged in courtship flights and investigated the nest box on the Merchants National Bank (later FirstStar, now US Bank) building, but did not actually attempt to nest. In the Quad Cities, a pair appeared to be incubating eggs under the Centennial Bridge; however, there were no observations of feeding in late June. The site was investigated in September, but no eggs, egg fragments, dead young, or even a definitive nest site were found.

The third site chosen for releases in 1992 (year four of the project) was Davenport. However, the arrival of a peregrine pair at Centennial Bridge precluded this site for releases, because the territorial adults could potentially harm young, hacked birds. As a result, eight birds (2F, 6M) were released from the Laurel Building in Muscatine. These eight peregrines were purchased by Iowa Falconers Association.

Iowans were increasingly entertained by their peregrines in flight. As a speck in the sky at thousands of feet, a peregrine turns about, folding its long wings. The bird becomes a bionic missile with anatomical attributes to do what it does, and how it does it — very well. Nictitating membranes rise from lower eyelids to protect its eyes from dust or windblown seeds. Cartilaginous baffles in its nasal cavities ensure the back of its skull is not blown out from its velocity. When diving at prey straight ahead from great distance at great speed, a peregrine has a conflict between vision and aerodynamics: it must turn its head approximately 40 degrees to one side to see the prey. Doing this, maximum visual acuity at the deep fovea of one eye is achieved, but the head in this position increases aerodynamic drag and slows the peregrine. The peregrine could resolve this conflict by holding its head straight and flying along a logarithmic spiral path that keeps the line of sight of the deep fovea pointed sideways at the prey. A wild peregrine, observed with binoculars, telescopes, and a tracking device, did approach prey the size of a pigeon from distances of up to 4,500 feet by holding its head straight and flying along a curved path that resembles the logarithmic spiral. Its prey is dispatched in a poof of feathers and, in the case of larger prey like a duck, is ridden to the shore. Its beak is specifically notched to separate the vertebrae of its quarry in a most efficient manner. The ensuing feeding frenzy is unlike any spectacle of spearing flesh, tendons, and muscle with feathers flying in a spray of mortal being that anyone could ever witness. It certainly sustains the peregrine's vitality until the next spectacle unfolds.

In 1993, 33 midwestern peregrine pairs produced 87 young. And in Iowa, there was much peregrine activity across the state. There were two successful peregrine nests and five young fledged that year. These were the first successful Iowa peregrine nesting attempts in nearly four decades. The peregrine pair returning to the American Republic Insurance building in Des Moines was the same that attempted to nest in 1992. Shortly after their return, the male was found decapitated after a three-bird territorial dispute. The winning male did not remain in the area. The female eventually mated successfully with a third male from the 1990 Cedar Rapids release. This pair successfully hatched and raised three young. The second successful nest occurred in Cedar Rapids, with a pair from the 1991 Des Moines release. Four eggs were laid and two hatched, but one died of exposure in stormy weather. Ric Wood of Iowa Falconer's Association then donated a young

male to foster into the nest. The adults accepted the fostered bird along with the remaining female chick. Both young fledged successfully from the nest.

A third nesting occurred in Iowa during 1993 at the Centennial Bridge in Davenport. A pair was observed demonstrating nesting behavior by Mark Washburn and Ed Timper, members of the Iowa Falconer's Association. Closer observation of the nest site did not reveal young or eggs, although a possible scrape was located along with peregrine prey remains. A decomposed body of a female peregrine from Wisconsin was found trapped in the I-beam of the bridge. Once she became trapped, the male abandoned the nest and attracted a new Minnesota female, too late in the season for nesting.

At Muscatine, a single 1992 male returned to the site but did not attract a mate. Because of the return of this bird, a second release was not made at this site. Each release site realized minimal loss of birds. It was noted that peregrines attract peregrines. Appearance of an occasional young interloper peregrine interacting with released birds generated additional excitement at release sites.

The original goal established by EPRP of 20 to 25 nesting pairs was met and replaced with a new regional goal of 40 territorial pairs. This new goal was also quickly surpassed in 1993. By 1994, the midwestern region had 62 territorial pairs with 41 successfully fledging 116 young (Redig and Tordoff 1994). Upon meeting the regional goal, many states gradually reduced their peregrine releases. However, Iowa's goal of establishing five nesting pairs by the year 1995 did not look promising without further releases. Furthermore, many did not consider the midwestern population recovered, since very little nesting was occurring on natural eyries or nest sites, except on cliffs in northern Minnesota and Michigan. Peregrines were still absent at historic eyries dotting the Mississippi River bluffs in northeastern Iowa.

To address the need for more releases in Iowa, a Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team (PFRT) was formed to continue releases in hopes of establishing a sustainable peregrine population that requires little or no maintenance or manipulation. Members of the team include, in no particular order, the Iowa Wildlife Federation, Raptor Resource Project, Iowa Falconer's Association, Macbride Raptor Project, National Park Service, Iowa Audubon Society, Des Moines Audubon, MidAmerican Energy, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The PFRT planned to continue urban releases in strategic locations along the Mississippi and inland along known flyways. The group also evaluated the possibility of releasing birds along the cliffs of northeastern Iowa.

Regionally there were 87 territorial pairs of which 45 nested successfully in 1996. Iowa had been able to maintain its two nesting peregrine pairs in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids during 1993–1996. Additional peregrine releases were initiated to achieve the Iowa goal of five breeding pairs by the year 2000 and 10-plus breeding pairs ultimately.

In Mason City, Lowell Washburn, chair of PFRT, generated funding and volunteers to release peregrine eyases at the Holnam Cement Plant. Between 1996 and 1998, 25 peregrines were released at this site. Notable birds from this release were a female (Alma) that produced five young as an 11-month-old peregrine. Also, a female at Queen's Bluff pioneered the return of the peregrines' call to the Mississippi River flyway when one young fledged.

At Bluffton in 1997, Bob Anderson's Raptor Resource Project initiated wild releases in nonurban settings. Four young were hacked and successfully fledged. In 1998 and 1999, Rodney Rovang and Effigy National Monument Park staff provided an ideal over-

look of the Mississippi River for hacking 18 peregrines. Visitors to the site marveled at the splendor of these magnificent birds adjusting and maturing into their natural role of raptor extraordinaire of the flyway. A male from the 1998 release pioneered the return of peregrines to the cliffs at Queen's Bluff just upstream in Minnesota.

At the Dubuque Quarry adjoining Eagle Point Park, Tom Deckert, Rob Kirkman, and Lowell Washburn of Iowa Falconer's Association joined efforts with Dr. Larkin Powell of University of Dubuque to release peregrines. In a two-year span commencing in 1999, 40 peregrines tested their wings and successfully fledged from a 200-foot limestone bluff. One of these males established a territory at the Quad Cities. Another established a territory and produced young across the river at Cassville, Wisconsin. It is believed other peregrine pairs may be nesting along the flyway and will be discovered in coming years.

In 2000, for the first time in at least three decades, wild peregrines were produced on Mississippi River bluffs. At Queen's Bluff, in southeastern Minnesota, one young fledged successfully from Iowa-released parents. In all, there were five pairs of peregrines at cliff sites along the Mississippi River in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin that year. In Iowa, the same pair nesting in 1999 in an Alliant Energy smokestack-mounted nest box near Lansing, now nested in a Bob Anderson nest box at a nearby cliff, an historical peregrine nest site. They fledged four young (1F, 3M), but the young female died post-fledging. It is worth noting that "these were the first young peregrines known to fledge from a cliff nest in the Mississippi River valley since the extirpation of the original population by DDT in the 1950s and 1960s" (Tordoff et al. 2000).

All told, 164 peregrines were hacked from Iowa release sites from 1989–2002. Eighty-four birds were released along the Mississippi River, 62 from limestone bluffs. Only one mortality was attributed to Great Horned Owl predation.

Seven successful Iowa sites produced 21 young in 2005. There were three additional sites with peregrine pairs for a total of ten territories in Iowa. Elsewhere in the Midwest, 193 territories had 166 nesting pairs. Of these 411 young fledged from 148 successful nesting attempts.

NEST SITE SUMMARY

To summarize, peregrine recovery in Iowa began at Cedar Rapids. In 1989–1990, 23 peregrines were hacked. One of the longer-lived females in the Midwest, 52V fledged from Cedar Rapids in 1989. She produced 21 young (plus seven augmented) in 14 years at Winnipeg, Manitoba. Beginning in 1993 until the present in Cedar Rapids, 41 peregrines have fledged from USBank building. The original female and male were hacked in Des Moines in 1991. In 2000, *S/5* (fledged from Des Moines in 1998) replaced the original female. A 1999 female that fledged from Cedar Rapids has been successfully nesting in Omaha since 2000. And in 2005, male 78/E (fledged from Kokomo in 2003) replaced the original Omaha male. Peregrines in Cedar Rapids have benefited from the stewardship of many volunteers. Willis Schnell and Theresa Chapel have hosted the original pair, first at Merchants National Bank, then FirstStar Bank, and currently USBank building. Steve Atherton and students at Kirkwood Community College have volunteered many hours of service identifying peregrines and providing assistance to fledgling birds. Jodeane Cancilla and staff at Macbride Raptor Project have banded birds and provided key stewardship at every opportunity.

After the initial release of 19 peregrines in 1991 at Des Moines, Iowa's second longstanding nest site developed at the American Republic Insurance Building. From1993 to

2005, 31 wild peregrines have fledged from one of Iowa's other first nesting pairs at this site. Paul Burkett and personnel at the American Republic Insurance building have assisted in all areas to be good stewards of peregrine needs. The adult male, 93T, was hacked at Cedar Rapids in 1990 and the original female was hacked in Kansas City in 1991. She was replaced in 2004 by 8/T* that fledged from the Colonnade building in Minneapolis in 2002. Jane Clark and Des Moines Audubon have provided stewardship for peregrines at this site in Des Moines and have contributed to many successful peregrine fledglings.

In 1992, the Quad Cities were scheduled to release peregrines. However, that project was moved to Muscatine when a peregrine pair took up residence on Centennial Bridge. Sightings of birds over the Quad Cities were common, until a pair was attracted to the MidAmerican Energy building in downtown Davenport. The nest box at this site was placed by falconer Tom Deckert. In 2002, a peregrine pair produced three young. Since that event, a pair returned to Centennial Bridge and in 2005 they were back at MidAmerican Energy headquarters. The adult female was hacked at Muncie, IN in 1999 and the male was hacked at the Dubuque quarry in 1999. It is believed this pair has produced 11 peregrines. Dave Stebben, with MidAmerican Energy, has become the primary steward at this site.

At Louisa Generating Station, Jim Haack of MidAmerican Energy hacked 18 eyases successfully from 1998–2000. Their efforts were rewarded in 2003 when a pair was attracted to a box affixed to the smokestack of the plant. Eleven peregrines have fledged from this site.

In 1999, the Alliant Energy plant at Lansing attracted a pair to a box that was placed on their smokestack by Bob Anderson and the Raptor Resource Project. Bob Anderson and Dave Kester have provided a nest box on a nearby cliff where peregrines nested historically with mixed success. When peregrines used the cliff box they were successful, but when a pair attempted to nest on rock ledge, the young have perished. Suspicion includes raccoon predation because raccoon sign was present on the ledge. In 2005, a pair had returned to the nest box on the smokestack and successfully fledged five young. Peregrines at this site have produced 14 young.

In 2004, a wild nesting pair was sighted near Waukon Junction by Dave Kester. The male fledged from the Dairyland Coop smokestack at Alma, Minnesota in 2002. The female fledged from the Northern States Power (NSP) plant in Monticello, Minnesota in 2003. In 2005, this pair relocated upstream to Leo's Bluff (Figure 3). This pair fledged two young from a natural historic eyrie without human involvement.

Since 2003, peregrine activity has been enjoyed at an Alliant Energy plant at Chillicothe, Iowa in Wapello County. Judi Johnson and plant personnel constructed and placed a nest box on their smokestack and reported a pair in 2005. Two young fledged successfully (Figures 4 and 5). An adult female at this site fledged at NSP Riverside Energy plant in 1999 and fledged three young at Louisa Generating plant in 2002. Relocations of this type are rare but have occurred. It is interesting to note that the female began at MidAmerican Energy plant on the Mississippi River and relocated directly west to the Alliant Energy plant on the Des Moines River. The male at this site is yet to be identified.

Currently there are three other sites with known peregrine pairs. A pair has been sighted at the I80 Bridge, north of the Quad Cities in eastern Iowa. And in Burlington a pair has been sighted at Great River Bridge. A third territory with promising potential is our Iowa Capitol in Des Moines (Figures 6–9). A female paired with a Des Moines male

Figure 3. Leo's Bluff, MN along the Mississippi River, a natural historic eyrie where a Peregrine Falcon pair fledged two young in 2005 without human intervention. Photograph by Lowell Washburn, Clear Lake, IA.

Figure 4. Female Peregrine Falcon nesting on Alliant Energy smokestack at Chillicothe, IA, on Des Moines River. Author Pat Schlarbaum photographed this female on 7 July 2005 while banding young in nest box 300-feet up on the smokestack.

in 2004 and 2005 but did not nest this year by all accounts. By some standards the peregrines' habitat base has increased with their proclivity to nest on human-made structures, in conjunction with their rediscovery of natural cliff sites.

FUTURE PLANS

Identifying breeding pairs with technologically advanced, remote cameras at nest sites is a potential consideration. Priority work will continue with conservation groups, projects, individuals, and energy companies to repopulate historic cliff eyries using nest boxes as needed. Energy plant smokestacks are often in close proximity to rugged bluffs with peregrine habitat, and a flourishing pigeon prey base is always present. Several energy companies have discovered another basic law of nature: it is better to work with nature than to fight it. They realize that it is helpful to recognize peregrines as a species whose presence will serve as an indicator of environmental stewardship.

All along the Mississippi flyway and elsewhere, peregrine courtship calls offer testimony to untold thousands of hours and dollars invested in bringing back the great-footed hawks. It is hoped these efforts have affected our society such that future generations might never again place these birds in jeopardy of extinction. As a standard-bearer of the ESA, the birds' return is a testament to the necessity and effectiveness of the ESA. Most endangered species unfortunately lack the high profile efforts and funding that have returned peregrines from the brink of extinction. But provisions of the ESA, as a tool for

Figure 5. Young Peregrine Falcons in nest box 300-feet up on Alliant Energy smokestack at Chillicothe, IA, on Des Moines River. Author Pat Schlarbaum took the photograph while banding them on 7 July 2005.

Figure 6. Author Pat Schlarbaum scoping Peregrine Falcon pair on roof of Iowa Capitol, Des Moines, where they have established a territory, 25 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

wildlife conservation, are unequivocal as a commitment to future generations, and the act must be preserved and strengthened at all cost.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the dedication of these professionals, volunteers, organizations, and businesses, success of Iowa's Peregrine Falcon Recovery Project would have been impossible.

Individuals: Bob Anderson, Ed Anderson, Steve Atherton, Robert Bailey, Joe Bannon, Phyllis Barber, Dan Belknap, Neil Bernstein, Irene Berry, Richard Bishop, Jerry Braynard, Paul Burket, Dan Calvert, Jodeane Cancilla, Theresa Chapel, Jane Clark, Dave Conrads, Dorothy Cunningham, Gail Dawson, Tom Deckert, Bill Desmarais, John Dingley, Dr. Ross Dirks, Jamie Edwards, Loren Forbes, Dennis Goemaat, Lyle Green Deer Sr., Jim Haack, Harlow Hadow, Jim Hansen, Lisa Hemesath, Carrol Henderson, Ruth Herzberg, John Heusinkveld, Dan Holm, Dr. Stan Holst, Jason Humble, Laura Spess Jackson, Judi Johnson, Kevin Johnson, Dave Kester, Rob Kirkman, Dennis Lenzendorf, Blair Lawson, Dean Lindsey, Terry Little, Dave McIllrath, Mark Martell, Tim Mason, Darrel Mills, Barb Nelson, Sue Nelson, Kay Neumann, Randy Nyboer, Bill Ohde, Rich Patterson, Julie Ann Plummer, Dr. Larkin Powell, Mike Ramsey, Dr. Pat Redig, Bill Rinehart, Dr. Dennis Riordan, Maria Pearson, Rodney Rovang, Pat Schlarbaum, Barb Schoenerr, Willis Schnell, Steve Schultz, Matt Solensky, Rod and Susie Stark, Dave Stebben, Larry Stone, Jon

Figure 7. Jay Gilliam digiscoping Peregrine Falcon pair on roof of Iowa Capitol, Des Moines, amid a blizzard of pigeon feathers, 25 June 2004! Photograph by Pat Schlarbaum, Boone, IA.

Figure 8. Female Peregrine Falcon digiscoped on roof of Iowa Capitol, Des Moines, 25 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

Stravers, Burke Thayer, Eli Thunder, Ed Timper, Dr. Harrison (Bud) Tordoff, Helen Troxel, Wendy and Terry Van DeWalle, Kristin Van Rees, Alice Wagner, Lowell Washburn, Mark Washburn, Curt Weiss, Joe Wilkinson, Clair and Carol Williamson, Charlie Winterwood, Ric Wood, Miriam Woods, Jim Zohrer.

Iowa agencies, businesses, and organizations: Alliant Energy, American Republic Insurance, Cedar Rapids Audubon, Des Moines Audubon Society, Elsie Mason Manor, Holcim (USA) Inc., Ho-chunk Nation, Illinois DNR, Iowa Audubon, Iowa DNR, Iowa Falconers Association, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Wildlife Federation, Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, Larry's Window Service, McKnight Foundation, MidAmerican Energy, National Park Service, Macbride Raptor Project, Raptor Resource Project, Telephone Pioneers, U.S. Bank, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Figure 9. Male Peregrine Falcon digiscoped on roof of Iowa Capitol, Des Moines, 25 June 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

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Field Reports — Fall 2005

Paul Hertzel

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WEATHER

August temperatures were normal and precipitation was near normal. Especially welcome were rains in the southeast, which provided temporary relief for serious drought there. The month ended with gentle south winds, a subtle indication of hurricane Katrina's presence to the south. September opened warm and calm with temperatures remaining steady and above normal throughout. Precipitation averaged near normal, but was not even. Southwest Iowa was very dry, while the north and northeast were very wet. The season's first mild freeze occurred on the 29th in the western half of the state, but it was not an indication of things to come. October temperatures were average, fluctuating to above average in some places. Burlington still had not recorded a freeze before the month was over. A significant cold front passed through on the 5th, but the associated rains were restricted to the west. For the month, precipitation was below normal and drought conditions returned, especially in the southeast. Warm weather continued into early November, which saw temperatures slightly above normal. Precipitation was about average, with early rains appreciated in drought areas. On the 12th, ten tornados were the first in the month of November since 1991. Then, snow fell over the northwest on the 15th–16th, and again over most of the state as the month and the season came to a close. On the morning of 1 Dec, nearly the entire state was under a blanket of 2–4" of snow.

HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

The mild conditions may have helped suspend usual waterfowl movements. Except for a September event involving thousands of Blue-winged Teal, the waterfowl migration appeared delayed. The first tundra-nesting geese arrived in mid-October, along with a few Surf Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks, but most of the waterfowl waited until the third week of November to gather in numbers. When it finally happened, concentrations along the Mississippi River were enormous, with more than 200,000 Canvasbacks counted. At the same time, thousands of scaup moved through the middle part of the state, and in the far west, more than 80,000 Snow Geese were observed along the Missouri River system.

Both hawk watches registered record or near-record numbers of Turkey Vultures, eagles, and Peregrine Falcons. For some reason, the Broad-winged Hawk migration was shifted westward, with record numbers along the Missouri River valley, while the usual large flights were missing in the eastern part of the state. October 5th saw an enormous flight of 1,878 Swainson's Hawks at Hitchcock Nature Center, and multiple sightings in central Iowa the next day.

August shorebird habitat across the state appeared promising, but rains in the north washed out conditions there, and USNWR never recovered as a major stopover spot. The best locations were Dunbar Slough, Jester Park, and various points along the Des Moines River. Lake Rathbun and Hawkeye WA also provided good habitat for at least part of the season, and hosted several noteworthy birds. An amazing 12 species of shorebirds stayed into the month of November, with three species lingering record late or near-record late.

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to expand their Iowa range, and multiple reports of White-winged Doves may be an indication of similar happenings with this species. Carolina Wrens and Acadian Flycatchers, usually associated with eastern and southern Iowa, made consistent appearances in the north, as far west as Kossuth County.

If songbird numbers were down, diversity was still strong. Dennis Carter described the migration in the northeast as lackluster, but when it was over, 33 species of warblers had been recorded in the state, compared to 28 last fall. This included sightings of several species that usually are early-departing, like Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Hooded Warbler. A Prairie Warbler was the first fall report since 1991. The mild conditions may also have contributed to some birds lingering late. A Yellow Warbler, a Yellow-throated Warbler, and a Pine Warbler were record late. In addition, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was record late, and Bobolinks and House Wrens were found near record late.

UNUSUAL SPECIES

In a remarkable continuation of a year that will be long-remembered for its rarities, the fall season produced three species new to Iowa. A Royal Tern was found at Rathbun Lake and stayed at least three weeks; a Green Violet-ear, possibly directed to Grundy County by hurricane Rita, gave photo opportunities to dozens of delirious photographers; and an Acorn Woodpecker at Brookside Park was captured by a single photographer in early September. Summer rarities that continued into the fall were Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Brown Pelican, King Rail, Black-headed Gull, and Vermilion Flycatcher. Hurricane Katrina brought at least one Magnificent Frigatebird to Iowa in early September, and a second frigatebird not identified to species was seen two weeks later. In addition, birders found among the season's migrants a Clark's Grebe, two Black Vultures, three Ferruginous Hawks, a Snowy Plover, multiple Red Knots, a Pomarine Jaeger, a Little Gull, a Black-legged Kittiwake, and a Western Tanager. And perhaps here to see what was all the fuss, a Common Raven and a Pine Grosbeak, two vagrants from the north, were seen poking about the state.

SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species. * = documented. County names are in italics. Full names of contributors are at the end of the article. Abbreviations used: **A** = area, **L** = lake, **M** = marsh, **m.ob.** = many observers, **NA** = nature area, **NM** = National Monument, **NWR** = national wildlife refuge, **P** = park, **R** = river, **RA** = recreation area, **Res** = reservoir, **SF** = state forest, **Sl** = slough, **SP** = state park, **USNWR** = Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, **WPA** = waterfowl production area, **WA** = wildlife area.

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK: A bird found by JJD 26 Jul at Lake Anita SP *Cass* (Dinsmore 2005) was not always easy to find, but stayed at least through 12 Sep (AaB, WO, AJ, BSc, MOe).

Greater White-fronted Goose: A bird that summered in Grimes in *Polk* continued there until at least 13 Aug (JB). The first migrants were found on 14 Oct with 5 in *Hardin* (MPr) and 51 in *Woodbury* (GLV). The high count was 1,200 on 31 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO), but small groups were observed all over the state, including 28 on 12 Nov in *Allamakee* (DK) and 90 on 13 Nov in *Sac* (RTh).

Snow Goose: Prior to October, only singles were found, with the first two migrants on 21 Aug 50 miles apart at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP) and Jester Park in *Polk* (JG). In Oct and early Nov, scattered pockets of under 100 were reported (MCK, RLC, JB) until 16 Nov when 50,000 were counted in *Pottwattamie* (MO). On 30 Nov, another 30,000 were counted by De Soto NWR staff moving through the refuge in *Harrison*. 1,000 more were in *Woodbury* on 29 Nov (GLV).

Ross's Goose: There were 13 reports of 1–9 birds from 11 widely scattered counties (RGo, MWJ, JRL, JG, SJD, MOr, DAk, CJF, RTh, AaB, L&BP, MPr, BFH, PH). Some Ross's Geese, like 2 in *Cerro Gordo* 28 Oct–26 Nov (RGo), show evidence of hybridization with Snow Geese.

Cackling Goose: The fall chronology of the migrant Canada/Cackling Goose presence remains indefinite, with the field separation of *parvipes* and *hutchinsii* still under study. However, flocks containing small numbers of Cackling Geese appear to have arrived after the first week in October, with the earliest reliable reports in *Polk* (SJD) and *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), both on the 9th. By the 28th, flocks with 100–250 birds were reported at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (AaB), and Rice Lake in *Worth* (PH). The largest reported concentration was 700 in a mixed flock of about 4,000 geese that spent the first half of Nov in *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Canada Goose: The boreal- and tundra-nesting races that migrate through Iowa, *interior* and *parvipes*, presumably arrived along with or in mixed flocks that also contained Cackling Geese, *hutchinsii*. It was apparent *interior* was here by late-October, but the more delicate matter of ascertaining the percentages of *parvipes* was not often mentioned by contributors. Perhaps 100 were part of a *Cerro Gordo* mixed flock of about 4,000 geese including *maxima*, *interior*, *parvipes*, *hutchinsii*, Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese, in early Nov (PH).

Mute Swan: An unbanded, wary individual was at Diamond Lake in *Poweshiek* 25 Aug–28 Nov (MPr, R&PA, CRE).

Trumpeter Swan: Unmarked pairs were reported in *Dickinson* (MPr), *Winneshiek* (FL), *Clayton* (DAk), and *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). A group of 8 unmarked birds was at Ada Hayden P in *Story* on 26 Nov (WO).

Tundra Swan: The first 49 were at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* on 5 Nov (JG), where the peak count was 2,000 on 20 Nov (BSc). Away from the river, 6 were in *Story* on 20 Nov (WO), and 9 were at Union Sl in *Kossuth* on 22 Nov (MCK).

Wood Duck: High count was 146 at Polk City WA in *Polk* in the last week of Oct (SJD, BE). 2 were still at Clear Lake on 17 Nov (RGo).

Gadwall: High count was 280 on 12 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

American Wigeon: The most were 140 counted on 12 Nov at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

American Black Duck: The first was 1 that spent 20 Oct–14 Nov at Polk City WA in *Polk* (SJD, R&PA, AaB, RLC). Up to 14 were counted at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* 11, 12 Nov (CRE, DAk). All others: 1 was at Spirit L in *Dickinson* 19 Nov (LAS), and 1 was at Red Rock Res in *Marion* 23 Nov (AaB).

Mallard: A Mallard X Northern Pintail was in *Polk* 10 Oct (AaB).

Blue-winged Teal: DNR counters noted impressive numbers passing through the state in Sep (LW). At Saylorville Res in *Polk*, concentrations in excess of 1,500 were noted 14 Sep (SJD) and 28 Sep (AaB).

Cinnamon Teal: No reports.

Northern Shoveler: The most in one place was a group of 390 on 14 Nov at Saylorville in *Polk* (AaB).

Northern Pintail: On 16 Oct, over 2,000 were gathered at the Runnells area along the Des Moines River on the *Warren/Marion* county line (SJD, JG, JJD).

Green-winged Teal: The peak was about 2,000 packed into the tiny Polk City WA in *Polk* by 13 Nov (BE, SJD, AaB).

Canvasback: Gathering birds at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* had built to perhaps as many as 170,000 by 11, 12 Nov (CRE, DAk), exceeding anything reported in recent years. DNR biologist Lowell Washburn said that by the end of the first week in Nov, more than 216,000 were inventoried on the Mississippi R. 50,000 still remained at Pool #19 in *Lee* at the end of the season (CRE).

Ring-necked Duck: As many as 10,000 were among the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl in the vicinity of Pool #9 along the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* on 11, 12 Nov (CRE).

Greater Scaup: A record early individual that may have summered in the area was found 24 Sep at W Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (LAS-details). The only other reports were from 1–4 birds at Saylorville Res in *Polk* beginning on 1 Nov (JG, SJD, AaB).

Lesser Scaup: A massive movement through the central part of the state occurred 12–15 Nov, with peaks of 3,050 at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* and 7,600 at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (RLC, JG, SJD, AaB, SSP, KLP).

Surf Scoter: Six reports: 2 were at Saylorville Res in *Polk* 10–21 Oct (SJD, AaB, JG, R&PA), 4 on 22 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP), 2 on 26 Oct at Big Creek L in *Polk* (SJD), 3 during 27 Oct–6 Nov at L&D 14 in *Scott* (SMF, JWR), 1 on 29 Oct at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (LAS, ET), 1 on 8 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (DPe)

White-winged Scoter: Four reports of f/imm types: 1 on 6 Nov at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET), 1 on 12 Nov in *Black Hawk* (MWJ), 1 on 15–17 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD, JG), and 1on 21 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (DPe).

Black Scoter: Five reports of f/imm types: 1 on 26 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD), 2 on 27 Oct at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET), 1 on 2 Nov at Coralville L in *Johnson* (DPe), 2 on 4 Nov at W Twin L in *Hancock* (SSP, KLP), and 2 on 14–15 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, JG, SJD).

Long-tailed Duck: An adult male on 15 Oct at Spirit L in *Dickinson* was 2nd-earliest on record (ET). All others: up to 4 on 15, 16 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD, JG, AaB), 2 on 17 Nov at Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 2 on 21–24 Nov at Diamond L in *Poweshiek* (MPr, R&PA, MWJ), 2 on 30 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Bufflehead: First was 1 on 15 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (JG), and the most were 300 counted on 11 Nov at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* (CRE).

Common Goldeneye: First was 1 on 27 Oct at Polk City WA in *Polk* (JG), and the most were 400 counted on 11 Nov at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* (CRE).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: A report was referred to the Records Committee.

Hooded Merganser: Peaked on 14, 15 Nov with 66 counted at Little Wall L in *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP), and up to 337 at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD, AaB).

Common Merganser: The first was early on 26 Oct at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (MPr). All other reports were in the second half of Nov with a peak of 821 on the 30th at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Red-breasted Merganser: First: 4 on 24 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB). Also reported in Nov in *Appanoose* (RLC), *Cerro Gordo* (PH), *Pottawattamie* (L&BP), and *Polk* (JB, JG, SJD), with a peak of 57 on 17–27 Nov at Saylorville (SJD, AaB).

Ruddy Duck: Outside of the 5,000 estimated at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* on 11 Nov (CRE), concentrations were 429 on 22 Oct at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (SJD), 354 on 23 Oct at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (LAS), and 150 on 16 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP).

Gray Partridge: All reports were in the northern one-third of the state, except for 2 birds seen on 11 Aug in *Fremont* in the extreme SW corner of the state (WRS). DNR August roadside survey results were encouraging for this species with the highest average density since 1988, even though the resulting estimates were slightly under the 10-year mean.

Ruffed Grouse: There were two reports of single birds found, one from *Clayton* (DAk), and one from *Allamakee* (RGo).

Greater Prairie Chicken: 6 were observed at the Kellerton Grasslands in *Ringgold* on 11 Nov (AaB).

Northern Bobwhite: There was one report from the northern half of the state of 6 on 2 Oct crossing from *Butler* into *Black Hawk* (AlB). According to DNR August roadside surveys, Iowa's quail population remains in a long-term decline. Density of birds in the south appears to be about one-third that of Gray Partridge in the north (0.6 birds/route compared to 2.05 birds/route).

Pacific Loon: A juv spent 15–21 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB-details, JG, SJD, WO, DPe, JB), and two were reported 18 Nov at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (JWR-details).

Common Loon: The first migrants were in Sep: 1 on 19 Sep in *Pottawattamie* (MO), 1 on 25 Sep in *Palo Alto* (JJD), and 1 on 26 Sep in *Polk* (JG). The migration was drawn out with a late peak on 14, 15 Nov when 24 were at Clear L in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 52 were at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Pied-billed Grebe: Some high counts were 96 on 24 Sep at Prairie L in *Dickinson* (SSP, KLP) and 161 on 15 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD). The last report was 1 on 20 Nov at Saylorville (JB).

Horned Grebe: 9 reports of 1–6 birds with the first 1 on 24 Sep at Welch L WPA in *Dickinson* (SSP, JG, KLP, AaB). Up to 20 were at Saylorville in *Polk* from 30 Sep–23 Nov (AaB, JG, SJD, SSP, JB, BE). Also reported from *Allamakee* (MPr), *Johnson* (CRE), *Pottawattamie* (L&BP), *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, PH), *Lee* (CRE), and *Plymouth* (BFH).

Red-necked Grebe: All: 1 on 24 Sep at W Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (RGo), 2 on 14 Nov at Clear L in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and 1 on 15 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD-details).

Eared Grebe: All: 2 on 24 Sep at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (SJD, AaB), 1–7 at Saylorville Res in *Polk* 26 Sep–9 Nov (JG, SJD, AaB), 2 on 13 Oct at Errington Marsh in *Polk* (RTr), 4 on 28 Oct at Little Wall L in *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP), 1 on 2 Nov at Big Creek L in *Polk* (SJD), and 2 on 9 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (R&PA).

Western Grebe: First was 1 on 24 Sep at W Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (RGo) and 2 more at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (SJD, MCK) that lasted until 15 Oct (ET). In Oct, singles were at Coralville L in *Johnson* (CRE, JLF), Lost Island L in *Palo Alto* (LAS), and Trickle Sl in *Dickinson* (LAS). At Saylorville Res in *Polk* there were 1–4 from 21 Oct–20 Nov (AaB, BE, DTh, JB, JJD, KLP, MPr, R&PA, SJD, SSP, WO). Also

in Nov: 1 at E Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (LAS), 1 at Bussey L in *Clayton* (DAk), 2 on at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* (FL, BSc), and the last 1 on 25 Nov at Pool #19 in *Lee* (CRE).

CLARK'S GREBE: 1 was at Spirit L in *Dickinson* 26–28 Nov (*LAS, *ET).

American White Pelican: The season opened on 5 Aug with 1,000 at Saylorville (Dinsmore 2005), and built to about 15,000 along the Des Moines R res system within a week (AaB, JG, JJD, PH, SJD). On 14 Aug there were 10,000 estimated to be at Jester Park alone (JG). Other concentrations were 5,200 on 29 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE), and 1,073 on 5 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO). There were still more than a dozen at Saylorville at the end of the season (AaB, SJD).

BROWN PELICAN: A subadult Brown Pelican, almost certainly the same one found in July in *Dickinson* by ET on the Minnesota border (Dinsmore 2005), reappeared at the beginning of the season at Saylorville Reservoir in *Polk* (*SJD, *JJD, *PH, *SSP, *JG, *JB, *DAk, *AaB, *CRE, m.ob, photos). (See article in this issue.) It spent the remainder of the fall loafing with the 1,000s of American White Pelicans on the reservoir system along the Des Moines River, with the last confirmed date 23 Nov below the Red Rock Res dam in *Marion* (AaB).

Double-crested Cormorant: Some concentrations were 4,015 on 26 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), 3,741 on 5 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and up to 3,325 on 16 Oct–5 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (SJD, JJD, RLC).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: On 4 Sep, boater Troy Kelsay spotted a Magnificent Frigatebird over L Macbride in *Johnson* (*KL, *DAk, *AaB, *JSc, *CJE, R&PA, photos), and notified KL, who located the bird and posted word of its presence on the IOU-sponsored internet listserv. Plumage indicated the bird was an adult female, possibly injured. The following day AaB and others noted it climbing high to join a kettle of migrating vultures, the last it was seen. A juv frigatebird not identified to species was found two weeks later on 18 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (*DCo). Hurricane Katrina hit the Louisiana/Mississippi coast on 28, 29 Aug, then tracked northeast through Tennessee and Kentucky, and on 31 Aug was absorbed into a frontal zone over southern Indiana/Ohio. There were multiple reports of frigatebirds in the Midwest over the next few weeks.

American Bittern: The last was 1 on 13 Oct at Cedar Fall Industrial Park L in *Black Hawk* (MWJ).

Least Bittern: Last two: 1 on 28 Aug at Long Pond in *Guthrie* (JG) and 1 on 5 Sep at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC).

Great Egret: The most in one place was 81 on 26 Sep at a *Warren* wetland near Cumming (JG). Several lingered quite late: 1 was on the Mississippi R at Davenport on 21 Nov, another was at Saylorville Res in *Polk* until 21 Nov (AaB, SJD), and the last was the 3rd-latest on record on 23 Nov at Ankeny in *Polk* (DK).

Snowy Egret: 1 found 15 Aug at L Macbride in *Johnson* stayed about a month (JLF, CRE AaB, DPe). The only others were 1 on 1 Oct at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE) and 1 on 5 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP).

Little Blue Heron: The only report was a juv on 4–7 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE, DPe, JLF).

Cattle Egret: All: 1 on 25 Sep at a marsh near Spirit L in *Dickinson* (DPe, AaB), 2 on 29 Sep–6 Oct at Jester P in *Polk* (AaB), 2 on 5 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP), and 1 on 6 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (SJD).

Green Heron: The last was 1 on 19 Oct in *Woodbury* (GLV), the only October report.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Almost last was 1 on 21 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO). Quite last were 3 on 26 Nov in *Linn* — BSc wrote "Three birds (2 imm) appeared along the artificially heated channel at Cedar Lake. If these birds remain, this marks the 8th consecutive winter for the species at this precise location."

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: The only report was of 2 adults and 4 juvs on 6 Aug at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* (DK).

***Plegadis* species**: There were two reports of ibis not identified to species: 1 juv was at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* on 2 Oct (SJD) and another individual was at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* on 13 Oct (SSP).

BLACK VULTURE: There were two records of this accidental species: 1 was spotted 20 Aug in the sky over Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* by hawk watch personnel (*JM, MO). Another individual, unable to fly, was picked up in a yard in Hazelton *Buchanan* on 21 Nov and taken to the Macbride Raptor Project (*SB, photos). (See article in this issue.)

Turkey Vulture: 3,343 was a new season record for the Hitchcock hawk watch in *Pottawattamie*, with their last one seen on 21 Oct (MO). The last in the state was observed over Algona *Kossuth* on 21 Nov (MO-details).

Osprey: Many reports from 15 counties. Peaked in late Sep at both hawk watches in *Marshall* and *Pottawattamie* (MPr, MO). Last 2 were at Saylorville in *Polk* on 20 Nov (JB).

Mississippi Kite: A pair nested on Payne St in Beaverdale just north of the city of Des Moines (JG), successfully raising one young (m.ob) that left the nest about 4 Sep (AMJ). (See photo at end of reports.) 7 were recorded on the season at the Hitchcock hawk watch in *Pottawattamie* (MO), including a record late individual on 5 Oct. The only other bird was 1 on 28 Sep over Algona *Kossuth* (MCK-details).

Bald Eagle: Another good year with a record total of 1,058 at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The peak day was 16 Nov at both hawk watches: 140 counted at *Hitchcock* (MO) and 46 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MO).

Northern Harrier: Reported steadily throughout the season from most parts of the state. 6 were at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* on 13 Oct (BFH) and 4 were there on 11 Nov (GLV). 349 counted at Hitchcock was a new season record total for the hawk watch (MO).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: First: 1 on 30 Aug at Brookside P in *Story* (KLP, SSP). Peak count in the east was 54 on 28 Sep in *Marshall* (MPr), and in the west, 93 on 25 Sep at Hitchcock NC *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Cooper's Hawk: Evidence of nesting was noted in August in *Kossuth* (MCK) and *Winneshiek* (DeC). Peak flight in the east was 25 on 28 Sep in *Marshall* (MPr), and in the west, 24 on 22 Sep in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Northern Goshawk: Only 3 were recorded at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie*, all adults, with the first 1 on 30 Sep (MO). The only others were 1 on 22 Oct in *Grundy* (DK) and 1 on 26 Nov in *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Singles were reported from 13 widely scattered counties, evenly spread through the season.

Broad-winged Hawk: Peaked in mid-to-late Sep with 340 on 19 Sep at Algona in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 660 on 24 Sep in *Pottawattamie* (MO) where the hawk watch station experienced a record high season flight of 1,682. At Grammer Grove in *Marshall*, numbers were down. The peak flight there was 72 on 26 Sep (MPr). Last was 3rd-latest on record on 19 Oct in *Marshall* (E&EA fide MPr).

Swainson's Hawk: The first two were on 6 Sep in *Story* (DJN) and 7 Sep in *Marshall* (BPr). In general, scattered reports of single birds across Iowa in Sep (AaB, JJD, SSP) preceded a sudden push of 905 birds recorded on 28 Sep at the hawk watch station in *Pottawattamie* (MO). But just one week later, a flight more than double that number occurred when 1,878 Swainson's Hawks were counted on the single day of 5 Oct (MO), as part of "the best day in the history of Hitchcock hawk watch" (MO). The next day, groups of 1–4 birds were encountered in *Story*, *Polk*, and *Boone* in central Iowa (SJD, JJD). Last was 1 on 15 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Red-tailed Hawk: 19, 20 Oct produced a record flight of 927 at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The season total there of 4,426 was a new high. Harlan's/Western dark morphs were reported in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), *Marshall* (MPr, RGo), *Story* (MPr), and *Woodbury* (BFH). These color morphs accounted for about 3% of the Red-tailed Hawks observed at Hitchcock.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK: Two were seen on the same day, 17 Oct: an adult light morph was photographed at the Hitchcock NC hawk watch station in *Pottawattamie* (*MO), and an immature light morph was seen at the Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (*SSP). A third bird, an immature dark morph, was observed at Hitchcock NC on 23 Nov (*MO).

Rough-legged Hawk: First few: 1 on 22 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO) and 2 more the next day, 1 on 23 Oct in *Warren* (KLP, SSP), and 1 on 28 Oct in *Ringgold* (DCH).

Golden Eagle: 22 was the season total at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* beginning with 1 on 21 Oct (MO). All others: 1 on 9 Nov in *Marshall* (MPr), 1 or 2 in *Allamakee* during 11–26 Nov (CRE, DK, RGo, BSc, DAk), 1 on 13 Nov in *Marshall* (MPr), and 1 on 16 Nov in *Marshall* (MPr).

Ameican Kestrel: Peak flight at Hitchcock in *Pottawattamie* was on 13 Sep (MO) and at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* was the next day (MPr).

Merlin: There were two August reports: 2 on 22 Aug at Glendale Cemetery in *Polk* (RIC) and another was at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* on 25 Aug (SSP). Then the floodgates opened and 27 reports followed right through to the end of the season (m.ob).

Peregrine Falcon: Season totals of 44 at Hitchcock in *Pottawattamie* and 14 at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* were both record totals for the hawk watches at those locations. There were 25 other reports from most parts of the state, almost always associated with water (m.ob). 5 Oct was the peak day for migrants, with 8 at Hitchcock (MO), 4 at Grammer Grove (MPr), and another at L Manawa (L&BP).

Prairie Falcon: October: 1 was at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 24 Oct (MO-details), and an adult on 26 Oct in rural *Johnson* was carefully documented (*JLF). November: 5 were documented by Hitchcock staff, on 1, 9, 16, 21 and 24 Nov (*JT, *MO). 1 on 29 Nov at Pioneer fields in *Polk* was chasing longspurs (JG-details).

Yellow Rail: No reports.

KING RAIL: All: The pair that nested at a wetland near Cumming in *Warren* (Dinsmore 2005) were photographed with young in Aug (JG). A large dark rail flushed in *Marion* on 13 Aug may have been a King Rail.

Virginia Rail: The last 2 were at Dewey's Pasture in *Clay* (RLC).

Sora: The last was 1 on 11 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

Common Moorhen: In Sep, immatures were still at Cardinal Marsh *Winneshiek* on the 5th (DeC) and at Long Pond in *Guthrie* on the 9th (AaB).

American Coot: The high count was an estimated 6,000 on 30 Oct at Jester P in *Polk* (BE).

Sandhill Crane: 12 on 25 Oct were at Aldo Leopold WMA in *Bremer* (MWJ) and 43 on 9 Nov were in *Boone* (Drake Larson fide SJD). Also reported in *Wright* (JJD, SJD), *Johnson* (MHB), *Tama* (MPr), *Pottawattamie* (MO), and the last: 7 on 13 Nov in *Sac* (RTh) and 8 on 13 Nov in *Polk* (SJD).

Black-bellied Plover: First few: 7 on 11 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe), and 1 on 12, 13 Aug at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (JG, JB, AaB). The high count was 17 on 26 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP). Last was 1 still at Hawkeye WA on 20 Oct (DPe).

American Golden Plover: The first was 1 on 21 Aug in *Marion* (AaB). There were reports of 1–5 from *Johnson* (DPe, DAk), *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, PH), *Polk* (AaB), *Dickinson* (MCK), *Woodbury* (BFH), *Iowa* (MHB), and *Appanoose* (RLC). The only concentration was 60 on 5 Oct in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last was 1 on 19 Nov in *Warren* (JS, RTr).

SNOWY PLOVER: SSP found a lone bird in the company of Semipalmated and Piping plovers on 22–28 Aug at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (*SSP, *MPr, RLC-details, DPe). This is the fourth accepted record in the last 10 years.

Semipalmated Plover: Three areas had concentrations: 25 were at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* on 5 Aug (SSP), and up to 123 were along the Des Moines R in *Marion* in mid-late Aug (SJD, AaB, SSP), and 15 were at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* on 28 Aug (CRE). Last was 1 on 17 Oct at Roberts Creek P in *Marion* (AaB). There were no reports west of *Greene*.

Piping Plover: All: 1–4 at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* 8–24 Aug (AaB, m.ob), 1 on 15 Aug at E Twin L in *Hancock* (SSP), 1 on 27 Aug–1 Sep along the Des Moines R east of Swan in *Marion* (SJD, KLP, SSP), and 2 on 14 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe).

Killdeer: A huge gathering at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* in late July/early Aug grew to 955 on 6 Aug (SJD, PH), the most at one location on record.

American Avocet: Already in the state in July, Avocets were found ten times in the southern half of the state in an extended migration with multiple reports in every month (m.ob) until the last bird that was record late on 19 Nov in *Jasper* (BVa). The largest groups were 8 on 20 Aug at Jester Park in *Polk* (TH, BE), and 11 on 17 Oct at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (AaB).

Greater Yellowlegs: The most were 21 on 4, 5 Nov at E Twin L in *Hancock* (SSP, KLP, RGo, CJF). Last reported were 5 on 6 Nov at Swan L in *Johnson* (CRE).

Lesser Yellowlegs. The largest concentration was 186 on 27 Aug along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (SJD). Last was 1 on 5 Nov in *Hancock* (CJF, RGo).

Solitary Sandpiper: The last two were getting late: 1 on 2 Oct at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SJD), and 1 on 15 Oct at Hooper WA in *Warren* (JS) was 2nd-latest on record.

Willet: All: 2 at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* 5–8 Aug (SSP, KLP, SJD), 1 at Saylorville in *Polk* 7–13 Aug (BE, WO), 4 at Red Rock Res in *Marion* 12, 13 Aug (JG, AaB, SJD), 3 along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (AaB, SJD), 1 at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET), and 1 at Saylorville in *Polk* on 14 Sep (SJD).

Spotted Sandpiper: Last two: 1 on 1 Oct in *Polk* (SJD) and 1 on 2 Oct at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Upland Sandpiper: Last two: 1 on 18 Aug in *Polk* (WO) and 2 on 20 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (MCD).

Hudsonian Godwit: An adult was at Runnells WA in *Polk* 9–16 Oct (SJD-photos, JG).

Marbled Godwit: All: A juv on 7 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP, KLP) and 2 on 13 Aug at Jester P in *Polk* (BE).

Ruddy Turnstone: All: 1 adult on 7 Aug at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD); 1 on 11 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe); 1 on 13, 14 Aug at Saylorville (BE, CRE); 2 juvs on 13, 14 Aug along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (SJD, JG); 1–3 on 20–24 Aug at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (SJD, JG, AMJ, CRE, AaB, SSP, RLC, MPr); 1 ad., 1 juv on 20 Aug in *Marion* (SJD); 1 on 26 Aug at Jester P in *Polk* (AaB); and the last on 5 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe).

RED KNOT: 1 juv found by CRE on 14 Aug at Jester P in *Polk* stayed until the 17th (*CRE, DPe, JG, AaB). 1 found by AaB on 26 Aug along the Des Moines R in *Marion* was joined by a second on the 28th (AaB-photos, *DAk, SSP-photos, JG, SJD, WO, DPe, R&PA), then moved downstream to Red Rock Res in *Marion* where they were last seen 4 Sep (SJD). 1 juv at Saylorville on 3 Sep may have been the bird found earlier at Jester Park (SJD-details)

Sanderling: All: 1 juv on 7 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (KLP, SSP); 1 on 13, 14 Aug at Jester P in *Polk* (DAk, JB, JG); 4 on 18 Aug at Sandpiper RA in *Polk* (BE); 2 on 21–24 Aug at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (AMJ, CRE, RLC); 3 juvs on 1 Sep along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (KLP, SSP); 1 on 24 Sep at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (MPr). No October reports, then 1 isolated juv on 13 Nov at Saylorville was the 3rd-latest on record (SJD-details).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: The only large concentration, at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* held through the month of Aug: 150 on 2 Aug (PH), 125 on 26 Aug (SSP), and 193 on 28 Aug (SJD). Last were 3 at Saylorville in *Polk* on 22 Sep (AaB).

Western Sandpiper: Two birds: 1 juv on 9 Sep along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (AaB-details), and 1 injured adult on 16 Oct at the Runnells WA in *Polk* (SJD-details, JG).

Least Sandpiper: There were three large concentrations: as many as 462 were at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* through 28 Aug (SJD, PH), 180 were at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* on 28 Aug (CRE), and 230 were along the Des Moines R in *Marion* on 9 Sep (AaB). Last was 1 on 28 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

White-rumped Sandpiper: Only one of two reports had details: 2 juvs were at Little Sioux R in *Buena Vista* on 26 Aug (LAS-details).

Baird's Sandpiper: High counts were 45 on 9 Sep in *Marion* (AaB), and 52 on 10–13 Sep at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SJD, SSP). The last was 1 on 5 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Pectoral Sandpiper: There were two peaks, undoubtedly dominated by adults, then juvs: 1,490 were counted along the Des Moines R in *Marion* on 27 Aug (SJD, AaB), then numbers decreased and rebuilt to 1,580 by 26 Oct (AaB). Last were 3 on 5 Nov in *Hancock* (CJF, RGo) and 3 on 6 Nov at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE).

Dunlin: All: 2 on 9 Oct at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe), 3–8 on 14–27 Oct at Jensen Marsh in *Madison* (JG, RTr), 5 on 5 Nov at E Twin L in *Hancock* (CJF, RGo), and 2 on 13 Nov at Big Creek L in *Polk* (Scott Rolfes fide SJD).

Stilt Sandpiper: Peaked along the Des Moines R in *Marion* where up to 224 were found 26 Aug–4 Sep (AaB, SJD). Last were 3 on 22 Oct at Jensen Marsh in *Madison* (JG). Also reported in *Greene*, *Johnson*, *Kossuth*, *Polk*, *Winneshiek*, *Woodbury* and *Worth* (BFH, CRE, DeC, DPe, JB, MCK, MPr, RGo, SSP).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: All: 1 on 2 Aug at Nauman Sod Farm in *Johnson* (MWJ), up to 11 during 5 Aug–5 Sep at Hawkeye in *Johnson* (DPe, CRE, DAk), 2–8 during 5 Aug–13 Sep at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (JJD, KLP, SSP), up to 21 along the Des Moines R in *Marion* during 7 Aug–4 Sep (AaB, JG, KLP, SJD, SSP), 4 on 9 Aug at Elk Creek Marsh in *Worth* (RGo), 1–4 during 21 Aug–3 Sep at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (CRE, MCD, MPr, RLC, WO), 4 during 26 Aug–3 Sep in *Clay* (LAS), and 1 on 7 Sep at Blackmore Sod Farm in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Short-billed Dowitcher: Last adults: 4 on 13 Aug in *Marion* (AaB). Last juv: 1 on 14 Sep in *Polk* (SJD). Nobody reported a group larger than 6 birds.

Long-billed Dowitcher: First adults: 2 on 13 Aug in *Marion* (AaB). First definite juv: 1 on 20 Sep at Union Sl in *Kossuth* (MCK). Some high counts were 94 on 8 Oct in *Greene* (SJD), 49 on 28 Oct at Banner WA in *Warren* (JS, RTr). Last were 2 on 19 Nov at Rock Creek SP in *Jasper* (BVa)

Wilson's Snipe: The largest concentration was 24 on 5 Nov at E Twin L in *Hancock* (RGo).

American Woodcock: Last few: 2 on 8 Nov in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 1 on 13 Nov in *Decatur* (JRL).

Wilson's Phalarope: The most were 15 on 28 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP) and the last was 1 on 19 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe).

Red-necked Phalarope: First: 1 on 6 Aug at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* (DK). Up to 10 were along the Des Moines R in *Marion* during 7 Aug–4 Sep (SJD, AaB, DAk, JB, JG, KLP, SSP, WO). Also reported in small numbers in *Appanoose*, *Dickinson*, *Greene*, *Johnson*, *Kossuth*, *Pottawattamie* and *Tama*. Last was 1 on 8 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (JB-details, JG), 3rd-latest on record.

POMARINE JAEGER: An intermediate juv was found 26 Oct at Red Rock Res in *Marion* by MPr, and was last seen 30 Oct (*MPr, *R&PA-photos, *JG-photos, DPe, MHB). (See photo at end of reports.) This was Iowa's third Pomarine Jaeger event.

Franklin's Gull: The first large movements occurred on 22–24 Sep, with 10,000 at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP), 5,000 at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (JG), and 28,000 at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (SJD). By 17 Oct, numbers at Red Rock Res in *Marion* had built to an estimated 26,900 (SJD, AaB, JJD). More than 5,000 were still at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* on 22 Oct (RLC). The last was 1 on 10 Nov at Lake Manawa (L&BP).

LITTLE GULL: A basic adult was found by LAS on 3 Sep at Welch L WPA in *Dickinson* and stayed through the 10th (*LAS, *ET, SJD-photo, JG-photo, RGo).

BLACK-HEADED GULL: For the tenth straight year, at least one individual of this species made an appearance at Spirit L in *Dickinson*. First noticed in July (Dinsmore 2005), a single adult was seen by many during the IOU Fall Meeting field trips on 24, 25 Sep. It was last seen 5 Nov (*LAS).

Bonaparte's Gull: A few early individuals arrived in Sep: 2 on 9–11 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD, JG) and 2 on 24 Sep at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP). Some high counts were 154 on 16 Oct at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (SJD) and 110 on 12 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Ring-billed Gull: An estimated 5,000 were flybys at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 31 Oct (MO). By 30 Nov, 7,000 were at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Herring Gull: 3 juvs were the first to return on 7 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP). The most were 222 on 30 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Thayer's Gull: A near record-early individual was found at Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* on 21 Oct (RGo-details). Otherwise, Thayer's Gulls returned to three reliable locations at about the same time: on 16 Nov on the Mississippi R in *Scott* (SMF), on 17 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, SJD), on 18 Nov at Red Rock Res in *Marion* (AaB).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: A juv was found on 2 Nov at Pool #13 on the Mississippi R in *Clinton* (*MCD) and may account for a later report that had no details.

Sabine's Gull: At four locations, all juvs: 1 on 10 Sep at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (SJD, JG), 1 on 14 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD), 1–4 on 22 Sep–6 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (L&BP, AaB, R&PA), and 1 on 12 Oct in Mason City (PH).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: A juv found by CRE on 11 Nov at Pool #9 on the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* was seen again the next day (*CRE, *DAk).

Caspian Tern: Small pockets of July nonbreeders were joined by migrants in August, especially at Saylorville Res in *Polk* where the peak of 138 was recorded on 29 Aug (JJD, AaB). Another 57 were at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* on 20, 21 Aug (RLC, CRE). The last were 2 on 9 Oct at Runnells WA in *Polk* (SJD).

ROYAL TERN: Iowa's first Royal Tern was found 20 Aug loafing in the company of Caspian Terns at L Rathbun in *Appanoose* by SJD and JG (*SJD, *JG, *MD, *THK, *JLF, *AJ, *GW, *CE, *DA, *MPr, m.ob). (See article in this issue.) To the delight of many, it stayed for more than 3 weeks, and was last reported on 14 Sep (R&SS).

Common Tern: Away from the Des Moines R reservoir system, the first arrival was 1 on 5 Aug in *Worth* (RGo-details). Ones and twos were at Saylorville and Red Rock reservoirs, and also Rathbun L through 22 Sep (AaB, CRE, JJD, JG, MCD, RLC, SJD). Last were 2 on 25 Sep at Gull Point SP on W Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (KLP-details, MPr, SSP-photo)

Forster's Tern: Peak counts were 82 on 21 Aug at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD, JG, JB), and 60 on 11 Sep at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC). Last was 1 on 15 Oct at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (MHB).

Least Tern: All: 1 on 12, 13 Aug at Sandpiper RA in *Polk* (DTh-details, WO), 1 on 18 Aug at Crawford Creek in *Ida* (JJD-details), and 1 adult on 18 Aug still at Port Neal Ponds in *Woodbury* (BFH).

Black Tern: The high count was 443 on 13 Aug at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD). The last 4 on 5 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* were a bit late and the only October report (L&BP).

Eurasian Collared-Dove: First county records were reported for *Jasper* (SJD), *Jones* (BSc), *Ringgold* (JJD), and *Woodbury* (BFH), bringing to 54 the number of Iowa's 99 counties with Collared-Dove records. Also reported in 17 other counties, including 41 found 24 Oct at Pleasantville in *Marion* (AaB).

WHITE-WINGED DOVE: 1 was at Washington Cemetery in Havelock *Pocahontas* on 2 Aug (*EW). A second bird spent 7–11 Aug at JG's feeder in Norwalk, *Warren* (*JG, *AMJ, SJD, photos). (See photo at end of reports.)

Black-billed Cuckoo: Last two: 1 on 11 Sep in *Decatur* (JRL) and 1 on 20 Sep in *Woodbury* (GLV).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: It was encouraging to see a steady sequence of 20 reports of this species from 15 counties, tapering off at the end of Sep. Four isolated Oct reports ended the season with the last 2 on 27 Oct at Elk Rock SP in *Marion* (SSP).

Barn Owl: A pair that nested successfully in a *Page* barn stayed in the area at least through 2 Sep (Bruce Ehresman fide JJD).

Eastern Screech-Owl: There were four reports of this resident owl. It might prove interesting to know what percentage of sightings is of red or gray phase owls in the different parts of the state.

Snowy Owl: 1 was north of Armstrong in *Emmet* on 28 Nov (Craig Zoellner fide PH) and another was in *Dallas* on 30 Nov (DS).

Long-eared Owl: The first was 1 on 22 Oct in *Scott* (DR). Also: 1 on 29 Oct in *Ida* (DoP), 1 on 15 Nov in *Polk* (DK), and 5 on 25 Nov in *Floyd* (RGo).

Short-eared Owl: 1 on 16 Oct in *Worth* (MHB), 3 on 29 Oct at Walch WA in *Cerro Gordo* (Bruce Marzinske fide RGo), 5 on 11 Nov at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV), and 1 on 22 Nov at Walch WA (CJF, RGo).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: 1 at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* on 27 Nov (MPr) was the only fall report.

Common Nighthawk: Loose flocks of migrant began to be noticed in the last week of Aug (JB, MCK). The largest concentrations were 174 on 8 Sep in *Clay* (LAS) and 430 on 19 Sep at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO). Last was 1 on 14 Oct in *Polk* (RIC).

Whip-poor-will: 5 individuals were counted in early mornings during 3–18 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Chimney Swift: The peak flight in the west was on 20 Sep when 960 were counted by hawk watchers at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The last were 3 on 13 Oct at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* (SSP).

GREEN VIOLET-EAR: On 27 Sep, a first state record Green Violet-ear appeared at Lyle and Marlene Neher's feeder in rural *Grundy* (*L&MN, *KN, *JLF, *PH, *MCK, *GW, *CRE, *SP, *JG, *MW). (See front cover photo.) The identification was first suggested by KN who also took the first documenting photos. Two days prior to the arrival of the hummingbird, the tropical depression remnant of hurricane Rita was straight south of Iowa in southern Missouri, pushing north-northeast along the Mississippi R valley. The Nehers welcomed into their home 195 visitors from 9 states/provinces before the bird departed on 4 Oct.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Reports tapered off in early Oct, then dried up on 10 Oct (RGo), except for one extremely late juv female that persisted at SJD's feeder in *Story* for 47 more days. It was last seen on 16 Nov (photos).

Red-headed Woodpecker: 126 migrants were recorded at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 2 Sep (MO). The last report was 3 on 18 Oct in *Marion* (SSP).

ACORN WOODPECKER: A first state record bird was photographed on 1 or 2 Sep at Brookside Park in Ames, *Story* (KZ).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Began passing through north-central Iowa in late Aug with 1 on 18 Aug in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 2 on 27 Aug in *Hancock* (JB). The last in *Woodbury*, where they can be found in summer, was on 14 Sep (BFH). Reports ended abruptly on 8 Oct with 1 in *Marshall* (MPr), 3 in *Pottawattamie* (JB, JG), and 1 in *Story* (KLP, SSP), except for one peculiar, much later individual on 13 Nov at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr).

Pileated Woodpecker: There were 11 reports from eastern counties.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: First were 5 were found 15 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (PH) and 1 more at Bacon Creek P in *Woodbury* (GLV). The last was 1 on 28 Sep at Centerville in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: The last two were 1 on 30 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK) and 1 on 4 Oct in *Warren* (JS).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: The first were found 14 Aug in *Wright* (SJD) and *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and two more the next day (MCK, SSP). All but one of the 17 reports were of single birds. The last with

details was 1 on 13 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Acadian Flycatcher: A bird that summered at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* was still there on 15 Aug (RGo). The last of this early-departing flycatcher was still singing on 17 Aug at Call SP in *Kossuth* (MCK), an unusual western location.

Alder Flycatcher: The last was 1 heard singing on 26 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP).

Willow Flycatcher: The last was 1 heard singing on 28 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SJD).

Least Flycatcher: There were seven Sep reports with the last on 22 Sep at Algona in *Kossuth* (MCK-details).

***Empidonax* species**: A very late bird not identified to species was in *Clayton* on 14 Oct (DAk).

Eastern Phoebe: Both adults and juvs were seen steadily through the month of Oct with the last 1 on 30 Oct in *Worth* (PH).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER: A male bird discovered 15 May in *Guthrie* (Kenne 2005) was so taken with the Whiterock Conservation Area, he remained the summer and into the fall, with the last sighting 10 Sep (JJD, m.ob).

Great Crested Flycatcher: The last two were on 14 Sep in *Marshall* (MPr) and *Johnson* (DPe).

Western Kingbird: Away from the western edge of the state: 1 on 2 Aug in *Polk* (Scott Rolfes fide SJD), 1 on 27 Aug in *Dickinson* (LAS), 1 on 9 Sep in *Decatur* (JRL), and 1 on 13 Sep in *Greene* (SSP). In the west, the peak flight occurred on 10 Aug when 15 were counted at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Eastern Kingbird: Began to gather in late Aug. The high count was 139 on 3 Sep at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SJD).

Loggerhead Shrike: There was no overlap in the shrike reports. The last Loggerhead was on 24 Sep in *Dickinson* (MCK), a month before the first Northern.

Northern Shrike: The first two were juvs on 29 Oct in *Polk* (SJD), and *Dickinson* (ET, LAS). Also reported in *Allamakee*, *Linn*, *Polk*, *Warren* and *Winneshiek* (BSc, CRE, DeC, DPe, JG, JS, MWJ).

White-eyed Vireo: The last were 5 on 18 Sep at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Bell's Vireo: Most of 13 fall reports were of birds still singing, including two in Sep. The last was 1 on 11 Sep singing at Jester Park in *Polk* (SJD). DTh found 8 birds on 4 Sep at Chichaqua WA in *Polk*.

Yellow-throated Vireo: The last three were on 18 Sep in *Jefferson* (DPo), 18 Sep in *Polk* (DTh), and 19 Sep in *Allamakee* (DeC).

Blue-headed Vireo: The first were 3 on 7 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). There were six reports in Oct with the last on 30 Oct at Brookside P (KLP, SSP).

Warbling Vireo: The last two were on 24 Sep in *Polk* (JB) and 25 Sep in *Worth* (SJD).

Philadelphia Vireo: The first few were on 20 Aug in *Story* (WO) and *Van Buren* (RLC). The last was 1 on 30 Sep in *Johnson* (DPe).

Red-eyed Vireo: Most: 27 on 3 Sep in *Polk* (SJD). The last was 1 on 30 Sep in *Johnson* (DPe).

Blue Jay: 3,000 were counted moving past the Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 5 Oct (MO).

COMMON RAVEN: In the north, a single bird was seen chased by American Crows on 23 Sep in *Buena Vista* (*JG). This is Iowa's 5th accepted record of Common Raven, four of which have been in the fall in the Lakes Country.

Horned Lark: 1,500 were counted moving past the Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 16 Nov (MO).

Purple Martin: Up to 1,062 gathered at Jester Park in *Polk* in the last week of Aug (SJD, BE, JG).

Tree Swallow: Gathered by the thousands at Saylorville Res in *Polk* and Rathbun L in *Appanoose* in Sep and early Oct. High counts were 7,000 on 11 Sep at Saylorville (SJD) and 4,500 on 2 Oct at Rathbun L (RLC). The last was 1 on 30 Oct in *Marion* (CRE).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: The last were 15 on 13 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP).

Bank Swallow: The most were 1,500 on 7 Aug along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (SJD), and the last were 25 on 13 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP).

Cliff Swallow: The most were 200 on 8 Aug at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP), and the last was 1 on 9 Oct at Swan L in *Johnson* (BSc).

Barn Swallow: 2,346 were counted over a 2-hour period on 1 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD). The next day, more than 500 were at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC). The last was 1 on 28 Oct at Diamond L in *Poweshiek* (R&PA).

Tufted Titmouse: An unusual western stray was in *Cherokee* on 24 Nov (DB).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: The first few were 2 on 5 Sep at L Macbride in *Johnson* (DAk, CRE) and 1 on 8 Sep at Fairmount Cemetery in *Scott* (WMZ). Reported widely, as far west as *Woodbury* (GLV).

Brown Creeper: The first migrants were noticed in late Sep with 1 on 24 Sep in *Dickinson* (MPr), 1 on 26 Sep in Story (SSP), and 1 on 29 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). 9 were counted at Brookside P in *Story* on 19 Oct (SSP).

Carolina Wren: Widely reported, as far west as *Adair* (DJN), and in three northern locations in *Kossuth* (MCK), *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and *Allamakee* (FL). Carolina Wrens were yard birds throughout the season in Mason City, Johnston (DTh), and Iowa City (JLF).

House Wren: Reports trailed off on 12, 13 Oct (MCK, SSP, JRL), except for one very late on 26 Oct in *Polk* (SJD) [3rd-latest].

Winter Wren: First few: 1 on 11 Sep in *Jefferson* (DPo) and 2 on 23 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK). There were 27 reports right through until the end of the season. Most were 10 on 29 Sep at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Sedge Wren: The last were 4 on 21 Oct at the Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (SSP).

Marsh Wren: Departed abruptly on 13 Oct. This is the last date given by four different contributors at four different locations: at Errington Marsh in *Polk* (RTr), Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH), Chichaqua WA in *Polk* (SSP, KLP), and Davis City in *Decatur* (JRL).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: The first were found 23 Sep in *Johnson* (THK), *Hardin* (MPr), and *Kossuth* (MCK), and the next day in *Dickinson* (SSP, KLP) and *Poweshiek* (BVa). 36 reports continued throughout the season.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: The first was 1 on 9 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK). The most were 60 on 24 Sep at E Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (RLC), and the last were 3 on 16 Nov in *Decatur* (JRL).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: The last were 3 on 17 Sep in *Marion* (JB, JG).

Eastern Bluebird: Groups of 20 or more were reported in late Oct (PH, SSP) with a high count of 65 on 25 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO). There were no reports after Oct.

Veery: The last was 1 on 25 Sep at Pinicon Alders WA in *Mitchell* (SJD).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: No reports.

Swainson's Thrush: The first were 2 on 27 Aug in *Iowa* (MHB), the only Aug report. The next were 4 on 2 Sep in *Story* (SSP), beginning a steady stream of almost daily reports for the next two weeks. The last were on 23 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP).

Hermit Thrush: The first was 1 on 24 Sep at Grinnell in *Poweshiek* (BVa). On

7 Oct, 11 were counted at Brookside P in *Story* (KLP, SSP) and 7 were at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* the next day (PH). Reports of 1–3 continued through the remainder of the season.

Wood Thrush: The last were 2 found 7 Oct in *Story* (KLP, SSP), the only October report.

American Robin: More than 14,000 were counted 19–24 Oct at Hitchock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Gray Catbird: The last was 1 on 28 Oct at Jackson Co Rec Trail in *Jackson* (CLW).

Northern Mockingbird: All: 1 on 14 Aug at Homestead in *Iowa* (DPe) and 1 on 14 Oct near Davis City in *Decatur* (JRL)

Brown Thrasher: The last was 1 on 31 Oct at Grinnell in *Poweshiek* (MPr).

American Pipit: The first to appear was 1 photographed on 13 Sep at Dunbar Sl in *Greene* (SSP). Some concentrations were 30 on 31 Oct in *Johnson* (DPe), and 40 on 3 Nov near Spillville in *Winneshiek* (DeC). The last was 1 on 27 Nov in *Polk* (SJD).

Cedar Waxwing: The largest flock was more than 400 on 3 Nov at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC, FL).

Blue-winged Warbler: All: 1 on 26 Aug at Hartman Reserve in *Black Hawk* (KN), 2 on 28 Aug at Amana Nature Trail in *Iowa* (MHB), 1 on 4 Sep at Burr Oak in *Winneshiek* and another on 9 Sep (DeC), and 1 on 10 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (CRE).

Golden-winged Warbler: The first were seen 22 Aug in *Winneshiek* (DeC) and *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). There were 12 reports of 1–4 birds with the last 1 on 25 Sep at Pinicon Alders WA in *Mitchell* (SJD).

Tennessee Warbler: The first was 1 on 15 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (SSP). 15 were counted on 9 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK). The last two were on 14 Oct in *Clayton* (DAk) and 16 Oct in *Marion* (SJD).

Orange-crowned Warbler: First few: 1 on 12 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 1 on 14 Sep in *Story* (SSP), and 1 on 22 Sep in *Woodbury* (BFH). Reported from 15 counties with high counts of more than 10 on 8 Oct (DAk), 8 Oct (JB), and 9 Oct (SJD). Sightings tapered off in the last week of Oct, except for one very late individual on 16 Nov in *Decatur* (JRL).

Nashville Warbler: The first was 1 on 15 Aug at Smith WA in *Kossuth*, the same place about 50 were encountered on 9 Sep (MCK). Steady reports into Oct ended with 1 on 14 Oct at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV).

Northern Parula: The last two were 1 on 2 Oct at New Wine P in *Dubuque* (DAk) and 1 on 11 Oct at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* (SSP).

Yellow Warbler: Usually leaves early, but there were seven reports this fall, including a record late individual on 6 Oct in *Polk* (JJD, SJD).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Very widely reported including 1 on 14 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (SJD) where the species was recorded in both summer months (Dinsmore 2005). SSP counted 17 at Brookside P in *Story* on 9 Sep. The last two were on 26 Sep at Brookside P (SSP) and 27 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Magnolia Warbler: 1–4 at a time reported from ten counties. The first two were on 20 Aug at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and Brookside P in *Story* (SSP), and the last was on 30 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (DPe).

Cape May Warbler: All: 1 on 2 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP), 1 on 9 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 1 on 11 Sep in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: All: 1 on 4 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK), 2 or 3 on 6–12 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (CRE, MHB, RD), 1 on 18 Sep in *Clarke* (JS), 1 on 25 Sep at Pinicon Alders

WA in *Mitchell* (SJD), and 1 on 8 Oct at New Wine P in *Dubuque* (DAk).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: The first few were 3 on 15 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 2 on 16 Sep in *Hardin* (MPr). About 150 were counted on 25 Sep, the second day of the IOU fall meeting in *Dickinson* (KLP, SSP). There were four Nov reports with the last 4 on 27 Nov at Lake Ahquabi SP in *Warren* (JS).

Black-throated Green Warbler: Reported in ones and twos from 11 counties, the first was an immature on 24 Aug at Bacon Creek P in *Woodbury* (BFH, GLV). The last two were on 9 Oct in *Polk* (RLC) and 13 Oct in *Story* (WO).

Blackburnian Warbler: First few were 1 on 13 Aug at Ledges SP in *Boone* (DAk) and 2 on 14 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (SJD). The last few were 1 on 12 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP) and 2 on 13 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Yellow-throated Warbler: All: 1 on 14 Aug was at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (SJD), and a record late individual appeared at E&EA's *Madison* feeder on 17 Nov and stayed through the end of the season. It was photographed on 18 Nov by Reid Allen.

Pine Warbler: All: 1 was in ET's yard in Dickinson on 24 Aug, and a second bird on 8 Oct in *Warren* (JG) tied the record late date for fall birds.

Prairie Warbler: A single bird on 14 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* was the first fall Prairie Warbler in Iowa since 1991 (SJD, JJD).

Palm Warbler: The first was 1 on 23 Sep in *Hardin* (MPr), which also placed Palm Warbler as the last warbler species to reappear in Iowa. The last of four other reports was 3 on 9 Oct in *Johnson* (CRE).

Bay-breasted Warbler: There were 17 reports from 10 counties with the first 1 on 27 Aug in *Marion* (JG), and the last 1 on 26 Sep in Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Blackpoll Warbler: Only 5 reports with the first on 23 Aug in *Story* (SSP) and the last on 19 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Cerulean Warbler: There was 1 lingering bird at Effigy Mounds NM in *Allamakee* on 4 Aug (DAk).

Black-and-white Warbler: The first was 1 on 12 Aug at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). 16 were in Brookside P in *Story* on 23 Aug (SSP). The last was 1 on 30 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (DPe).

American Redstart: The last 3 were on 24 Sep, many miles apart: 1 in *Allamakee* (FL), 1 in *Dickinson* (MPr), and 1 in *Jefferson* (DPo).

Prothonotary Warbler: No reports.

Worm-eating Warbler: The only report was 4 on 20 Aug in *Van Buren* (RLC).

Ovenbird: The first apparent migrants appeared on 20 Aug in *Van Buren* (RLC) and *Story* (SSP). The last two were 1 on 1 Oct at George Wyth SP in *Black Hawk* (AlB) and 1 on 7 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (KLP, SSP).

Northern Waterthrush: There were 8 reports from *Cerro Gordo*, *Hardin*, *Polk* and *Story* spanning the period 12 Aug–26 Sep (KLP, MPr, RGo, SSP).

Louisiana Waterthrush: 1 was at Ledges SP in *Boone* on 28 Aug (SJD).

Kentucky Warbler: All: 1 on 12 Aug at Effigy Mounds NM in *Allamakee* (DAk), 1 on 20 Aug in *Van Buren* (RLC) and 1 on 28 Aug at Sharon Bluffs SP in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Mourning Warbler: The first was 1 on 17 Aug at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr). This was followed by 13 scattered reports of 1–3 birds ending with 1 on 18 Sep in *Clarke* (JS).

Common Yellowthroat: Except for 1 very late on 16 Nov in *Decatur* (JRL), reports trailed off in early Oct.

Hooded Warbler: 1 on 19 Aug in *Johnson* was a yard bird for Jim Scheib's neighbor (JLF).

Wilson's Warbler: The first was 1 on 14 Aug at Pilot Knob SP in *Hancock* (SJD). In early Sep, as many as 8 were seen in one day at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). The very last was near record late on 16 Oct in *Linn* (BSc) in the company of Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Canada Warbler: The first was 1 on 12 Aug in *Allamakee* (Dennis Lenzendorf fide DAk). There were 32 reports from 13 counties with the last 1 on 20 Sep in *Jefferson* (DPo).

Yellow-breasted Chat: No reports.

Summer Tanager: 5 were counted at DeKalb WLA in *Decatur* on 16 Sep (JJD). The only later reports were 1 on 18 Sep in *Appanoose* (RLC) and a very late urban bird in Des Moines *Polk* on 7 Oct (JRC).

Scarlet Tanager: The last two were 1 on 1 Oct at George Wyth SP in *Black Hawk* (AlB) and 1 on 2 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

WESTERN TANAGER: A female was at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 2 Oct (*MO).

Spotted Towhee: All: 1 on 6 Oct at Bacon Creek P in *Woodbury* (*BFH), 4 at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 13 Oct (MO), and 1 on 26 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (*SJD).

Eastern Towhee: The last was 1 on 16 Nov in *Decatur* (JRL).

American Tree Sparrow: The first few were 1 on 19 Oct in *Decatur* (JRL), 2 on 21 Oct in *Story* (SSP), and 5 on 21 Oct in *Hamilton* (SSP). The first large concentration was 100 on 30 Oct in *Worth* (PH).

Chipping Sparrow: Except for 1 quite late on 20 Nov in *Madison* (JS), reports trailed off in late Oct.

Clay-colored Sparrow: 4 were found and photographed on 8–10 Oct at Glendale Cemetery in *Polk* (AaB, JG, AMJ). There were three other reports of this rare fall visitor, but none had details.

Field Sparrow: The last was 1 on 19 Oct in *Story* (SSP).

Vesper Sparrow: The last was 1 on 22 Oct at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

Lark Sparrow: The only report was 2 on 5 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DPe).

Savannah Sparrow: There were three Nov reports with the last on 15 Nov in *Polk* (SJD).

Grasshopper Sparrow: Last in the north, 1 on 14 Sep at Wildin Prairie in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last in the south, 1 on 12 Oct in *Decatur*, 5 miles from the Missouri border (JRL).

Henslow's Sparrow: The last was a male still singing on 4 Sep at Neal Smith NWR in *Jasper* (SJD).

Le Conte's Sparrow: The first few were 4 on 24 Sep at Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (DJN, WO), 1 on 25 Sep at Tomahawk M in *Sac* (MPr), and 1 on 25 Sep at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (DPe). Groups of 20 or more were at Errington M in *Polk* on 9 Oct (SJD, JG) and Welp WPA in *Kossuth* on 9–12 Oct (MCK). 14 were counted in a small area at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* on 13, 14 Oct (BFH, GLV) and projected to represent about 8% of the total. The last few were 3 on 25 Oct at Bauer Sl in *Hamilton* (DeC) and 2 on 27 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: The first was 1 at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* on 21 Sep (RLC), and another was at Otter Creek M in *Tama* on 26 Sep (MPr). All the others were found in Oct with the highest count 7 at Errington M in *Polk* on 9 Oct (SJD, JG). The last was record late, singing at Elk Creek M in *Worth* on 30 Oct (PH).

Fox Sparrow: Returned on 6 Oct at Cardinal M in *Winneshiek* (DeC) and Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). Reported the next day, and nearly every day through the remainder of the season, with the most: 65 on 24 Oct at Chipera Prairie in *Winneshiek* (Larry Reis fide DeC).

Song Sparrow: Adults were seen carrying food as late as 5 Aug in *Jefferson* (DPo). The last report was 6 on 25 Oct in *Story* (SSP).

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first was 1 on 14 Sep in *Jefferson* (DPo). The high count was 22 on 12 Oct in *Decatur* (JLR), and the last were 10 on 27 Oct in *Polk* (JB).

Swamp Sparrow: Some high counts were 40 on 11 Oct at Chichaqua in *Polk* (SSP) and 36 on 12 Oct near Davis City in *Decatur* (JRL). The last report was 1 on 30 Oct in *Story* (KLP, SSP).

White-throated Sparrow: A record early bird was in *Jefferson* on 31 Aug (DPo). The next arrival was found 8 Sep in *Johnson* (DPe). The high count was estimated to be more than 200 on 12 Oct in *Story* (KLP, SSP), where the last report was 15 on 30 Oct at Brookside P (KLP, SSP).

Harris's Sparrow: The first was at Spirit L in *Dickinson* on 24 Sep (DPe). Peaked in late Oct and early Nov with the most: 30 at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* on 4 Nov (GLV). The last were 4 on 19 Nov at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

White-crowned Sparrow: 2 on 24 Sep at Doolittle Prairie in *Story* were 3rd earliest (DJN, WO). More than 30 could be found at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* 9–16 Oct (DTh, BE). The last were 5 on 25 Oct at Pine Valley in *Jackson* (CLW).

Dark-eyed Junco: The first few were 2 on 14 Sep in *Jefferson* (DPo), 1 on 17 Sep at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr), and 1 on 22 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Lapland Longspur: The first were 2 flyovers on 19 Oct at Welp WPA in *Kossuth* (MCK), while looking for Smith's. Moderate flocks of several hundred arrived there by the 23rd. On 4 Nov, 1,500 were counted in *Hancock* (SSP, KLP), another 1,000 were in *Hamilton* on 8 Nov (MCK), and 2,780 were counted in *Story* on 16 Nov (SJD).

Smith's Longspur: All: 11 on 23 Oct at Welp WPA in *Kossuth* and another 25 there on 26 Oct (MCK).

Snow Bunting: The first were 2 on 24 Oct at L Meyer in *Winneshiek* (Larry Reis fide DeC). Small groups of 1–12 were found in *Cherokee*, *Hancock*, *Johnson*, *Marshall*, *Polk*, and *Winneshiek* (AaB, CRE, DB, JG, KLP, MPr, SJD, WO).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 20 were at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* on 11 Sep (RLC). The last was 1 on 10 Oct at Squaw Creek P in *Linn* (DPe).

Blue Grosbeak: 11 were in *Woodbury* on 15 Aug (GLV), and DB counted 24 while driving through *Harrison* and *Monona* at about the same time. The last was 1 on 7 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (SJD).

Indigo Bunting: The last was 1 on 10 Oct at Glendale Cemetery in *Polk* (AMJ).

Dickcissel: The last was 1 on 13 Oct at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH).

Bobolink: 240 on 21 Aug at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* was a conservative estimate, and the most ever seen by DTh. Reports continued in decreasing numbers through Oct with the last 2 on 30 Oct at Jester Park in *Polk* (BE), the second-latest date on record.

Red-winged Blackbird: Flocks of 30,000 and 40,000 were estimated at Ventura M in *Cerro Gordo* and Cardinal M in *Winneshiek* in late fall (PH, DeC).

Eastern Meadowlark: The last was identified by song on 21 Oct at the Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (SSP).

Western Meadowlark: 8 were still singing on 22 Oct in *Appanoose* (RLC), and 6 were identified by voice on 4 Nov at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: The only report was 20 on 13 Sep in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

Rusty Blackbird: The first was 1 on 24 Sep at Diamond L in *Dickinson* (SJD).

About 250 were at Amana L in *Iowa* on 31 Oct (MHB, CRE), and another 230 were counted at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on the same date (MO). Reports continued through the end of the season.

Brewer's Blackbird: The only report was 1 on 6 Oct at a wetland near Cumming in *Warren* (JG-details).

Common Grackle: 50,000 moved past the hawk watch station at Hitchcock NC in *Pottawattamie* on 31 Oct (MO).

Great-tailed Grackle: All: 1 on 27 Aug at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG), 9 on 14 Oct at Errington M in *Polk* (JG), 66 on 5 Nov in *Palo Alto* (LAS), and 15 on 19 Nov at Dan Green Sl in *Clay* (LAS).

Orchard Oriole: The last two were 1 on 28 Aug in *Marion* (WO) and 1 on 4 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Baltimore Oriole: Reports slowed in the first half of Sep with the last 2 on 13 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK).

PINE GROSBEAK: The first sighting of Pine Grosbeak in Iowa since 1997 occurred at Twin Elms County P in *Hardin* (*KW) when a female bird was found on 11 Oct, a record early date for this species.

Purple Finch: The first was 1 on 31 Aug in Spencer *Clay* (LAS). It was nearly a month before the next was found on 23 Sep in *Clayton* (DAk), and then reports became more regular, with the most: 8 on 21 Oct in CJF's backyard in *Cerro Gordo*.

Red Crossbill: No reports.

White-winged Crossbill: No reports.

Pine Siskin: 1 on 24 Aug on the ISU campus in *Story* (SJD) might have summered there, as a few have done in the past. The next was 1 on 9 Oct at an Algona feeder in *Kossuth* (MCK).

American Goldfinch: At least 300 gathered to feed on 9 Sep at a food plot planted in sunflowers in *Kossuth* (MCK).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: The only report was 1 on 19 Sep at a Long Grove feeder in *Scott* (SF-details).

SUMMARY

Many, many thanks to the 81 contributors who submitted 3,262 individual records that make the basis of this report. These records came from 75 of Iowa's 99 counties. 288 species are covered in this report. Once again, the day producing the most individual records was the first day of the IOU Fall Meeting, which was 24 September.

COMMENT: REMEMBERING BETH PROESCHOLDT

Even in her first contribution to ***Iowa Bird Life***, in June of 1958, Beth Proescholdt mentioned hawks. The passage is brief, but poignant: "On a September afternoon a Broad-winged Hawk flew into our elms and rested a moment before leaving." From the very beginning, Beth wrote about hawks in the context of wild lives briefly converging with the life that contemplates them. In 1961, she wrote, "As low flying clouds moved from E to W and an occasional break in the clouds revealed hawks, I wondered how many more were hidden from my view above the clouds." Forty-seven years, 10 articles, and 100 field reports after that first note, Beth Proescholdt gave the IOU her last record, a Swainson's Hawk whose presence momentarily converged with hers at Grammer Grove on a September afternoon in 2005. Spotting it high in the air, Beth pointed out the hawk to her son, Mark, who watched it float on tapered wings, bank against the sky, and then disappear.

CONTRIBUTORS

Danny Akers	DAk	Garnavillo
Reid & Pam Allen	R&PA	West Des Moines
Eugene & Eloise Armstrong	E&EA	Van Meter
Dick Bierman	DB	Cherokee
John Bissell	JB	Grimes
Aaron Brees	AaB	Des Moines
Alan Brown	AlB	Cedar Falls
Sondra Cabell	SB	Hazleton
Dennis Carter	DeC	Decorah
Bob Cecil	RIC	Des Moines
Jane Clark	JRC	Clive
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Ross Silcock	WRS	Tabor
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Dennis Thompson	DTh	Johnston
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Mississippi Kite on nest with one nestling, Des Moines, Polk, *24 August 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Juvenile Pomarine Jaeger at Red Rock Reservoir, Marion, *29 October 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Juvenile Red Knot at Pinchey Bottoms, Marion, *27 August 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Royal Tern at Lake Rathbun, Appanoose, *20 August 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Juvenile Eastern Phoebe at Anderson Lake, Hamilton, *5 October 2005. Photograph by Carl Kurtz.*

Golden-crowned Kinglet at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines, Polk, *9 October 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

White-winged Dove in Jay Gilliam's backyard, Norwalk, Warren, *7 August 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch, Fall 2005

Mark Orsag

Figure 1. Rufous morph Swainson's Hawk, Hitchcock Nature Center, 30 September 2005. Photograph by Jerry Toll, Omaha, NE.

SEASON IN SUMMARY

I remember well the excitement at the end of the 2004 season when we nearly hit the 12,000 raptor mark with 19 species spotted and 694 hours logged. In 2005, we logged 730 hours (between 11 August and 20 December), counted 16,372 raptors, and spotted 20 different species! The 2005 seasonal overall passage rate was an excellent 22.4 migrant raptors/vultures per hour. This was also the year that the new hawk watch tower debuted, for which all the hawk watchers are grateful to both the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board (PCCB) and the chief financial contributor to the tower, the Iowa West Foundation. It was quite a season! This was the third year of full-time coverage at the Hitchcock Nature Center (HNC) made possible again by the PCCB's funding of a part-time counter position. Mark Orsag, on a fall sabbatical from Doane College, took the position this year. It turned out to be a breakout year, in a number of ways, for the HNC hawk watch. The number of raptors was unprecedented as was the scale of the big days after strong cold fronts plowed through the previous night. The biggest day of the season was 5 October, when a record 2,519 raptors (including 1,878 Swainson's Hawks) and vultures were counted. Indeed, by that time, the 1,000-bird barrier had already been cracked once before in 2005 (on 28 September); two four-digit days in the same season — it was unprecedented!

There is a simple answer to the reason for the big difference this year — the three common buteo species (Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, and Red-tailed Hawk). All three posted huge record seasons. Of the additional 4,419 migrant raptors and vultures seen in 2005 versus 2004, these three species accounted, collectively, for 4,103, or nearly 93% of the increase. We had always known, however, that if "things worked out right," we could see big increases in Red-tailed Hawk and Swainson's Hawk numbers. It was the Broad-winged Hawk flight in the fourth week of September 2005 that was really the major surprise of the entire season. Never, in all the years of partial, half-time, and full-time counting at Hitchcock since 1992 had any of us ever seen anything remotely like 2005's flight of broad-wingeds. Kettles of these eastern buteos were actually common over a four-day span that had at least one of us wondering whether he wasn't somehow on an

eastern Pennsylvania ridge top and not in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. There was also a broad, if not universal, trend toward earlier migration in 2005 for raptors at HNC. There was fairly good diversity as well in the 2005 raptor/vulture flight, though some of the occasional and uncommon species were indeed occasional and uncommon this season. We did, however, record twenty raptor/vulture species for the first time since 2002. We spotted a Black Vulture, two Ferruginous Hawks, and a record seven Prairie Falcons in 2005.

Results for the much less painstakingly monitored nonraptor flight in 2005 were somewhat more mixed on the whole. With few fronts early on, some of the early season staples such as Eastern Kingbird, Chimney Swift, and American White Pelican posted very poor numbers. Other species, however, fared better; Red-headed Woodpeckers posted good numbers again this season (continuing a recent trend) and Blue Jays returned to levels not seen since the late 1990s. Some of the middle season migrants such as American Robins, American Crows, and Franklin's Gulls demonstrated fairly typical to excellent flights, but all the icterid species posted very subpar totals (also continuing a recent trend). Waterfowl and waterbirds, particularly Snow Geese, generally posted improved totals (over the very poor numbers of the last two seasons) as well, though even here, there were some notable exceptions.

As in all seasons at HNC, fall 2005's weather was very important in shaping the season. As often has been the case in recent years, hot summer weather prevailed well into September with temperatures really beginning to cool only in the last week of that month. During October to early November, temperatures alternated between unusually mild and fairly seasonal. After a mid-November snowstorm, however, the weather pattern changed markedly, becoming quite cold (bitterly cold at times) for most of the last month of the season.

There were more days with some form of precipitation this year than we have had for some years, but only two days this season were entirely lost as a result of weather conditions. There was snow cover on the ground for about half of the last 40 days of the season. The overall weather pattern was fairly stagnant early in the season but later became quite active with many Pacific fronts of varying intensity, a couple (always strong) Canadian fronts, and some strong low pressure systems. Many of this year's weather systems were fairly slow moving, but there were still a number of intensely windy days.

THE SEASON IN DETAIL

Early Season (11 August–8 September)

Despite record count hours in August, migrants of any kind were scarce. In our most informal month, August counting is conducted at HNC on a part-time basis. When present, counters were confronted with mostly calm and hot conditions. What wind there was generally clocked in as either variable or from the SE/ESE. These are generally not conditions for good flights at Hitchcock and, combined with the often bird-poor opening month of the season, these conditions made for some extended views of largely empty skies. The best single day of the month numbers wise for raptors and vultures occurred on 23 August when a mere 26 birds (mostly Turkey Vultures and Ospreys) moved through low, tacking into 5–15 mph SE winds. Only 184 southbound raptors and vultures were counted during the entire month.

In comparison to three of the past four seasons, August 2005 was a very poor month indeed, with only 2003 being on a par with 2005 in terms of overall August futility. At

the end of the month, the early season staple immature Turkey Vulture flight was running at less than half of normal levels, and there had been little in the way of a push of young Red-tailed Hawks or Northern Harriers. There had only been one Mississippi Kite recorded (on 25 August by Jerry Toll). A fairly good early showing of Broad-winged Hawks (including an immature dark morph on the 30th) was, however, one August 2005 bright spot. Ospreys, American Kestrels, and Cooper's Hawks also defied the overall monthly trend and posted solid early numbers.

The nonraptor flight was very low volume as well. Such early season staples as American White Pelicans, Chimney Swifts, and Eastern Kingbirds all posted poor numbers. Red-headed Woodpeckers seemed to be off to a solid start, however, and there was a strong one-day showing by at least one other early migrant — 101 Common Nighthawks were recorded on 31 August.

The month was far from a total disaster though because of the appearance of two rarities. The main event occurred on 20 August when a **Black Vulture** was spotted by Jim Meyer and Sandy Reinkin as it soared among Turkey Vultures high over HNC. This was only the second Black Vulture ever recorded at Hitchcock and documentation was accepted by the IOU Records Committee. A notable nonraptor, a female **Western Tanager**, was found on 17 August (documentation accepted by the IOU Records Committee).

With the beginning of daily counting on 1 September, hawk watchers hoped that the new month would bring an increase in southbound migrants, but it didn't happen immediately. Over the first eight days of September, the winds remained generally southerly, which isn't necessarily a bad thing early in the season. Rain curtailed several count days, however, and although Turkey Vulture migration began to pick up a bit, most other species (other than Ospreys) simply didn't appear in any numbers. By 8 September, the peak day count for the season was a disappointing 66 on both 4 and 7 September. Turkey Vultures (47) and Ospreys (12) dominated the first of these days and Turkey Vultures (32) and Sharp-shinned Hawks (11) composed the majority of the flight on 7 September. Sightings of rarities began to level off as well with a season-first Merlin (on the 7th) being the best bird of the period.

The nonraptor flight was still fairly poor over this opening stretch of September and indeed continued to be generally poor well past mid-month. American White Pelicans began to move through in some numbers, however, on the 2nd (325), and Red-headed Woodpeckers continued their strong showing with a 2005 peak flight of 126 on the same day. By mid-month, there had been a good flight of American White Pelicans (1,049) and a good early showing of Double-crested Cormorants with the passage of the 2005 season's first real cold front on 13 September.

The raptor flight also showed signs of improvement as mid-September approached. Raptor/vulture flights of 100+ birds occurred on 9, 13, and 14 September. Turkey Vultures (98) dominated the flight on the 9th of 116 vultures and raptors. Steady SSE winds at 15–25 mph gave the low-flying birds nice updraft/tacking conditions at low altitudes without knocking them back too much, and they moved south low over the Loess Hills ridge tops despite 90-degree heat. A young Red-shouldered Hawk and two Merlins gave this flight some notable birds as well. An unexpectedly strong Pacific cold front moved through with some early showers on the 13th, finally bringing northwest winds and temperatures below 80 degrees. The raptor/vulture flight totaled 181 birds for the day with the flight dominated by Turkey Vultures (54), Red-tailed Hawks (43), and American Kestrels (31); three early Bald Eagles and two Mississippi Kites were notable finds on the

day. A classic echo flight of 108 raptors and vultures occurred the next day with the SE winds too light to interfere with thermal production or thermal use by migrant raptors. Turkey Vultures, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks dominated this flight; 612 American White Pelicans were the nonraptor highlight on the 14th. After this two-day push, however, things remained relatively quiet until 19 September.

The Prime Period (19 September–20 October)

This is when the raptors annually come in big numbers at Hitchcock; but this year, this prime month exceeded expectations in a big way. Between 19 September and 30 September, each count day saw a flight of at least 110 southbound raptors and vultures. Along with the run-of-the-mill 100+ flights, this last portion of the month contained flights in the 200+ range (one such flight), 300+ range (3), 500+ range (1), 700+ range (2), and 1,400+ range (1). Excellent flights occurred during a wide range of conditions. Overall, this period was characterized by steady movement of Turkey Vultures and Sharp-shinned Hawks and more surprisingly and notably by a spectacular and unprecedented (for HNC) four-day burst of Broad-winged Hawks — a species that is usually not seen in such numbers so far west. A classic HNC prefrontal flight on 21 September really kicked things off. With winds strongly out of the SSW and temperatures soaring into the high 90s, 149 southbound low-flying Turkey Vultures were joined by a mixed bag of raptors for a total flight of 235 individuals. The cold front came through with rain and 10–15 mph northeast winds on the 22nd. Eleven species of raptors and vultures were seen with the day's final tally at 332 birds. As is usual with such two-day flights in mid-to-late September at HNC, vultures dominated the prefrontal south-wind flight and raptors the postfrontal north-wind flight. The much colder 22nd's flight was dominated by Sharp-shinned Hawks (91) and an early push of red-taileds (89). The nonraptors found the north winds of the 22nd more to their liking as well with decent showings from Franklin's Gulls (4,071), Blue Jays (734), and Double-crested Cormorants (614).

The next day, 23 September, constituted a huge surprise for watchers Jori How, Mark Orsag, Chad Graeve, and Jerry Toll. The sky was overcast with a low cloud ceiling and erratic gusty SE winds (5–25 mph). It seemed like the classic conditions for a poor flight at HNC — indeed next to nothing flew in the morning, but things were not destined to play out that way. In the early afternoon, kettles of Turkey Vultures and Broad-winged Hawks began to appear directly overhead and labor though. Mostly, the two species flew separately, but there was one large mixed kettle of 45 broad-wingeds and 21 vultures. By the end of the day, 561 raptors and vultures of 11 species had been recorded with three early Bald Eagles and six Peregrine Falcons the highlights. The counters left happy but profoundly puzzled as to how the birds had managed it — were conditions aloft different somehow? The next day was to provide even greater surprises.

Rain and fog wrapped the watch until after noon on 24 September, and nearly a dozen counters, despairing of seeing anything, left. Experienced counter Sandy Reinkin, however, sensed something might change and stayed. She was rewarded. Clearing began suddenly, the sun came out, and a beautiful calm day with the temperature just below seventy degrees ensued. As soon as the fog began to clear, Sandy, helped by later-arriving visitors Urban and Nancy Leonard, Mary Clausen, Larry Brockstreet, and by alert HNC staff members Brett Ford and Tina Popson, began to count scores of Broad-winged Hawks. Emergency calls quickly went out to other hawk watchers from Brett Ford at HNC, and soon Sandy and her impromptu group had plenty of help. This was an exceptionally

beautiful flight to watch with groups of birds sailing leisurely through at very low altitudes for much of the day. Two big kettles of broad-wingeds passed very low over HNC's RV campground with campers gawking in amazement after being told by Brett to "look up." By the end of the day, an HNC day record 660 broad-wingeds had been counted along with more than 130 other raptors of nine species. On 25 September, NE winds prevailed at 10–15, and the broad-wingeds (414) flowed again. Sharp-shinned Hawks (93) and Turkey Vultures (148) also put in strong showings for counters Jerry Toll, Jim Meyer, Sandy Reinkin, Don Paseka, Don and Shirley Maas, and Loren and Babs Padelford. The day's final tally topped 700 raptors and vultures once again. In retrospect, we can only credit the relentless easterlies of this time period and perhaps also pressure waves generated during the very active (and tragic) hurricane season for this unexpected broad-winged bonanza at HNC in 2005.

A weak low pressure system over the next two days generated an additional 500+ raptors and vultures before a strong Pacific cold front with powerful NW winds was due on 28 September. Everything seemed ready for the annual HNC "Big Day" — the day that Swainson's Hawks would fly in big numbers over the Loess Hills. Predictions were confidently, and as it turned out, correctly made. Hawk watchers gathered in very good numbers on the 28th and weren't disappointed. A classic Hitchcock "Big Day" ensued — very much along the lines of "Big Days" that have occurred at about the same time, and under similar conditions, in previous seasons. By the end of the day, 1,401 raptors and vultures of 12 species had moved south; as had been expected, Swainson's Hawks (905) had dominated the flight. Their kettles and streams often became intermingled with those of Franklin's Gulls (16,000). Migrants of all kinds filled the air — Sharp-shinned Hawks (91) and Red-tailed Hawks (259) were joined by American White Pelicans (710), Double-crested Cormorants (840), and Blue Jays (1,400). Even after this huge day, the pace of migration failed to slacken significantly. The last two days of September added yet another 508 raptors and vultures.

October began with yet another big day on the 1st. With the annual Hawk Fest celebration drawing in visitors and a field trip visit from Loess Hills Audubon, space on the partially-reconstructed lodge deck was at a premium, but the birds once again arrived in big numbers — 407 Swainson's Hawks and 104 Turkey Vultures composed the bulk of a flight of 579 raptors and vultures tacking in steady (10–20 mph) SSE winds. This was a morning-heavy flight as kettles of Swainson's Hawks spotted by Sandy Reinkin near Mondamin in the afternoon of the 30th arrived at HNC and worked their way past the day's many visitors and counters Sandy Reinkin, Pat Williams, Sue Mattix, Jerry Toll, and Clem Klaphake. The day had begun with an early morning visit from Mark Davis of the *Omaha World Herald*; he interviewed hawk watchers Sandy Reinkin and Pat Williams and got some excellent photos of raptors that were roosting near Hitchcock that morning, which later appeared in the *Herald* along with his excellent article. The pace of migration slowed just a bit over the next three days, but still more than 500 more southbound birds of prey were added to the season's tally.

Another strong Pacific cold front produced howling WNW winds at 10–40 mph on 5 October with temperatures dropping into the mid-50s. In anticipating this system, which had already dumped large amounts of snow in the western Dakotas, the prevailing sense among Hitchcock's raptorphiles was that the flight on 5 October would be a lesser version of what had happened on 28 September. This turned out to be quite wrong. Counters Jerry Toll, Mark Orsag, Don Paseka, Loren and Babs Padelford (joined later in

the day by Sandy Reinkin, Al and Cindy Reyter, and Bob Fuchs) were in for something very special indeed. The kettles of Swainson's Hawks appeared early and often on the 5th and at times seemed to be coming from everywhere — low, high, overhead, and streaming through to the west and east of the lodge. The counters struggled hard in the late morning to keep up with three different and semiconstant steams of Swainson's Hawks. Red-tailed Hawks (230) and Turkey Vultures (237) also flew in excellent numbers on what turned out to be the best day in the history of Hitchcock hawk watch. The day's record count of 1,878 Swainson's Hawks was probably a bit low due to a somewhat balky clicker on four early big kettles. Northern Harriers flew in great numbers as well, with the day's count of 42 tying the existing HNC single-day record. A season-high eight Peregrine Falcons were counted along with a Merlin and a late Mississippi Kite. The overall raptor count of 2,519 was a new day record for HNC. Big nonraptor counts on the 5th were posted by American White Pelicans (1,073), Double-crested Cormorants (3,741), and Blue Jays (3,000).

This huge day cleaned out most of the early season migrants and even seems to have put a bit of a dent in the middle-season migration for nearly two weeks — though numerous ESE wind days probably didn't help matters either. Between 6 and 18 October, a combination of waning Turkey Vultures and slowly waxing Red-tailed Hawks dominated what good flights there were. We failed to reach 100 raptors and vultures four times during this stretch and topped 200 only once (on the 6th). We hosted some visitors from several Hawk Watch International sites (in Montana and Washington) during this period. The nonraptor flight over this span was pretty unexceptional as well with the only real highlights being strong flights of Double-crested Cormorants (2,045 and 1,427) on 6 and 14 October respectively. Three noteworthy raptors were recorded, however, during this mediocre period — an immature Red-shouldered Hawk on 6 October and an adult Red-shouldered Hawk along with an even more notable adult light-morph **Ferruginous Hawk** on 17 October. The latter's rapid and impressive progress past Hitchcock was recorded in a series of distant photographs by Mark Orsag. These photos were displayed for the rest of the season on the Hitchcock hawk watch bulletin board, along with captions posted by Kelly Herek, at the lodge. (Photographs were accepted by the IOU Records Committee.)

October 19 and 20 were dominated by a huge two-day blitz of Red-tailed Hawks that accompanied a slow-moving Pacific cold front that brought modest north winds and some rain. In a repeat of what had happened earlier with the broad-wingeds, counters were both elated and baffled. This was hardly the sort of powerful front traditionally associated with big red-tailed days at HNC. Both days together, however, produced nearly 1,100 total raptors and more than 920 red-taileds. The flight on the 19th featured 412 Red-tailed Hawks and an immature Red-shouldered Hawk for counters Mark Orsag, Leslie Sorenson, Loren and Babs Padelford, and Don and Janis Paseka. The record flight of 515 red-taileds on the 20th started late after morning-long rain and fog. Veteran counter Clem Klaphake, like Sandy Reinkin in September, waited out the adverse weather and started the big day out on his own and received help later on. Uncharacteristically for red-taileds, several large kettles of more than 70 birds each were seen on 20 October. As two of these groupings were moving slowly south, they were sky-filling enough to obscure (for some of those present) a fast-moving Merlin that darted through low over the knoll and down the exterior of Westridge! The nonraptor flight over the two-day period had been strong on the 19th and weaker on the 20th. On 19 October, strong flights of a number of

species occurred: Franklin's Gull (9,000), American Crow (1,850), and American Robin (7,000). The traditional prime period of raptor migration at HNC for 2005 had ended with two more huge days.

The Late-Middle Season (21 October–15 November)

Annually at HNC, this is an odd, at times awkward, interim between the diverse and high volume month of the prime period and the stark, harsh majesty of the "Eagle Days" of the last month of the season. This late-middle segment of the season started, in 2005, with another slow-moving Pacific frontal system pushing through an additional 169 Red-tailed Hawks (accompanied by 34 other raptors of five species that included the season's first Golden Eagle). Hawk watchers Bill Johnson, Sandy Reinkin, Jori How, Jerry Toll, and Mark Orsag were joined on deck by many highly enthusiastic attendees from the Iowa Naturalist Educators Association Conference (hosted this year by Hitchcock Nature Center). This led to a somewhat raucous and thoroughly enjoyable day on the crowded deck. After a poor day between the fronts, a powerful Alberta Clipper Canadian front rolled through fast and hard on 23 October — temperatures fell into the 30s and a definite touch of November was in the air. The day was overcast throughout, but steady, strong NW winds at 10–25 mph provided updrafts and pushed the birds through. A number of visitors from Illinois and Kansas were present along with HNC regulars Jim Meyer, Mark Orsag, and Jerry Toll. At day's end, 434 raptors had been recorded by the shivering hawk watchers — red-taileds (347) had dominated the flight once again with a good early showing from Bald Eagles (22) and another strong flight of Northern Harriers (37). Two Rough-legged Hawks (including a dark morph), a Golden Eagle, and a late Osprey provided the highlights. The nonraptor flight was varied with American Crows (5,500) and American Robins (4,000) the dominant species. It was, given the time of year, a truly impressive day!

The next week at HNC was graced by a number of out-of-state visitors from Missouri and Kansas but was, unfortunately, a very slow period with only one 100+ day (24 October), which also saw the passage of the season's first Prairie Falcon. A Rough-legged Hawk on 28 October and a Golden Eagle on 25 October were the only other notable raptors of the stretch. The nonraptor flight over this seven-day period was somewhat better with steady numbers of American Crows and American Robins along with some early groups of Greater White-fronted Geese. On 31 October, the Hitchcock tradition of excellent Halloween raptor and nonraptor flights continued. The raptor slump ended with a flight of 182; Red-tailed Hawks (142) dominated this flight and appeared in great variety — a Krider's, a western rufous morph, three Harlan's, and two western dark morphs. The nonraptors, however, stole the show (as had been the case in 2004). On 31 October 2005, the following were among the tens of thousands of southbound nonraptors recorded: 1,200 Greater White-fronted Geese; 2,000 Franklin's Gulls; 5,000 Ring-billed Gulls; 4,500 American Crows; 7,000 Red-winged Blackbirds; 50,000 Common Grackles; 25 Northern Shovelers, and a Common Loon.

November began with a decent echo flight of 115 raptors on gusty W winds on the 1st, but things went rapidly downhill after that over the next week. Southerly winds predominated and daily raptor counts never hit 50, though the nonraptors (most notably American Crows and icterids) did a bit better. The trailing edge of a low pressure system brought WNW winds and cooler temperatures on 9 November. Raptor migration resumed with a flight of 158 Red-tailed Hawks accompanied by twenty other raptors of

five species (with a Prairie Falcon and two Rough-legged Hawks among them). This was one of the first flights counted fully from the newly-finished hawk tower, and the experience left HNC's counters very impressed with the imposing, sturdy structure and the magnificent views it provides. A strong nonraptor flight also developed on this day featuring geese (including 664 Snow Geese), crows, and icterids.

The next three days, unfortunately including HNC's annual Eagle Day Festival, proved very slow for migrating raptors. On 12 November (Eagle Day) temperatures were in the 60s, and dozens of visitors were treated to uncharacteristic close-in views of a variety of waterfowl (Canada Geese, Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, Northern Pintails, Mallards, American Wigeon, Redheads, Gadwall, and a lone Green-winged Teal were recorded along with a number of unidentified ducks) battling with might and main to move south into the teeth of winds that gusted to more than 40 mph. Only two eagles were recorded — albeit, both provided good close-in looks. A humorous proposal by hawk watchers Sue Mattix and Mark Orsag to rechristen the 12th "Duck Day" and hastily replace the eagle flyers with Mallard flyers was discussed but ultimately rejected as impractical by both the hawk watch group and the HNC staff! On 13 November, a Pacific cold front pushed through with 15–25 mph NW winds and counters Jerry Toll, Sue Mattix, Jim Meyer, and Clem Klaphake were joined by a highly distinguished group of visiting birders that included Laurine Blankenau, Jim Sinclair, and Urban and Nancy Leonard for a cold and windy day of raptor viewing atop the new tower. Overall, 124 raptors were counted with a rough-legged and a Golden Eagle the highlights. The raptors were accompanied by an estimated 23,500 Snow Geese. The next day's flight was a very poor one, and the day after that, a mid-November blizzard-like storm hit Hitchcock with a fury that limited visibility to twenty yards and made a trip up the new tower resemble high-altitude mountaineering. This storm completely shut down the snowed-in watch on 15 November. This event marked a real change in the season's weather, and it was a fitting end to the late-middle season and a telling beginning to a late season that would be very cold and snowy and very different from what the norm has been in recent years.

The Late Season (16 November–20 December)

To say the late season started with a bang would be an understatement — more like the roar of winds over a frozen snow-covered landscape. If there was a day made for eagles to glide majestically south over the icy and glittering Loess Hills, it was 16 November 2005. Snow blanketed Hitchcock, the sun shone, and steady strong NW winds at 10–25 mph blew throughout the day. By the end of the day, a record 140 Bald Eagles had been counted along with 112 Red-tailed Hawks; six other species had made appearances as well with one Peregrine Falcon, a Prairie Falcon, two Northern Goshawks, and a Rough-legged Hawk providing the highlights. At one point in the morning, a group of 16 Bald Eagles was followed down ridge ten minutes later by another group of 18 eagles. Don Paseka, HNC's late season stalwart eagle watcher, had once again demonstrated his toughness and extraordinary worth as a late-season HNC counter by withstanding the bitter conditions far better than anyone else. The 16th had been quite a day for nonraptors as well with 50,000 Snow Geese being the dominant species on a day that had also seen the southward passage of everything from two small flocks of Rusty Blackbirds to much larger mixed flocks of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs.

A shift to southerly winds and a brief burst of warming temperatures slowed things down over the next several days, but then a slow-moving Pacific frontal system pushed

through bringing triple digit flights on 21 and 23 November with an additional good late showing of 81 late-moving birds on 20 November. The nonraptor flight was slow throughout the period though. The flight on the 20th was dominated by 65 Bald Eagles but also featured two rough-leggeds and two Golden Eagles. On 21 November, highs reached the mid-50s, but strong north winds made it feel much colder for hawk watchers Steve Davis, John and Marilyn Mancini, Jerry Toll, Phylisha Wolfe, and Mark Orsag. Ninety-one Bald Eagles were counted along with, once again, a pair of rough-leggeds and Golden Eagles. A lone Prairie Falcon was also recorded. Similar conditions prevailed on 23 November with strong WNW winds gusting to 35 mph. Sixty-four Bald Eagles dominated a flight of 104 raptors that took place mostly in the morning. An in-close immature dark-morph **Ferruginous Hawk** was the highlight of this flight. (Documentation was accepted by the IOU Records Committee.) Though temperatures fell over the next week, the wind remained southerly, and rain, snow, and fog prevailed. The NW winds returned, however, on 28 and 29 November, and the Bald Eagles and other raptors responded. Geese were moving as well, with a massive flight of 35,000 Snow and 6,500 Canada geese on 29 November — they streamed past the watch all day in small to mid-sized flocks. Bald Eagles once again composed the majority of the raptor flights with counts of 69 and 83 respectively. Rough-legged Hawks were recorded both days with a Golden Eagle being recorded on the 28th and a Merlin on the 29th. The 108 raptors on the 29th would turn out to be the last triple-digit flight of the season. Unlike the past several seasons, November 2005 ended with snow on the ground and highs in the 20s. Nearby lakes and rivers were freezing or already frozen.

December began with a visit from photojournalist Peter Soby of *KETV/Omaha* and a strong flight of geese — more than 20,000 Snow Geese were counted on 1 December. A decent flight (34) of Bald Eagles also developed that day including two well-timed in-close eagles that clearly "wanted to be on television." (Soby's superb piece aired on KETV on 30 December.) Most of the next week proved very slow even when northerly winds prevailed. It took a viciously cold windy day on 6 December to get the Bald Eagles (72) moving again. Hawk counter Mark Orsag spent the day running up and down the tower in a fruitless attempt to keep warm. With highs around zero and NW winds gusting to 20 mph, it was that kind of day! Bald Eagles accompanied by a few other raptors and occasional flocks of Canada Geese continued to trickle by over the next two days, which were hardly much warmer. Jerry Toll found a Short-eared Owl hunting near the watch on 7 December. A switch to southerly winds brought two slow days, but things revived on the weekend for Jim Meyer, Don Paseka, and Jerry Toll. Over the two-day span of 10–11 December, 77 eagles were counted (75 balds and 2 goldens). With howling NW winds and highs around 30 degrees, conditions were again frigid, but these two days provided us the margin that allowed Hitchcock to record 1,000 Bald Eagles in a single season for the first time ever.

The rest of the season was brutally cold and painfully slow; daily migrating raptor counts were usually in the single digits and reached 20 birds only three times out of the last nine count days. By the time the last bird of the season, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, whizzed past Clem Klaphake and Mark Orsag on 20 December, everyone was ready for the end. Fall migration was down to the barest trickle and some Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks already seemed slightly interested in drifting north — perhaps adjusting their winter ranges. It had been an incredible autumn.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

For the purposes of this annual report, I will be using only the last three full-coverage seasons at Hitchcock (2003–2005) to determine average counts. A more extensive report, examining the full spectrum of data from 1999–2005 is, however, in the offing fairly soon.

Black Vulture (1). This year's 20 August sighting was the first since 22 September 2002. This remains an irregular early-season vagrant species at Hitchcock. If the pattern from its northward range expansion in eastern North America holds, however, we may look for it to become a more frequent find in coming years.

Turkey Vulture (3,343). This was a new season record for this abundant early-season migrant. The three-year average count is 3,076; the three-year average passage rate is 4.48 vultures per hour. The 2005 passage rate was 4.58 per hour. The three-year full coverage data for this species supports a pattern of slow, steady annual increases at HNC in terms of both overall counts and passage rates. 2005's flight was also fairly typical in other ways. September was the top month for this species, but the peak flight of 237 vultures occurred on 5 October. The last individual bird was recorded on 21 October. As usual, this species often flew on south winds, particularly on days ahead of cold fronts. The Turkey Vulture is the dominant species during the early season at HNC.

Mississippi Kite (7). The average count is 11 birds per season over the 2003–2005 span. 2005's flight was well below average for this occasional early-season migrant. September was the top month. The 2005 peak flight of two occurred on 13 September. Passage rates were even more below average due to the record number of hours covered in 2005. It has been hypothesized in the past that the Mississippi Kites recorded at Hitchcock are birds that disperse northward in late summer out of more southerly areas. Drought conditions on the Great Plains have seemed to spur northward dispersal and later bigger fall southward flights in past years. This year's somewhat more wet weather (at least locally) may account for this species poor performance in 2005. Once again, however, we will need more data for a conclusion. Southward passage was associated in 2005 with northerly winds after cold fronts.

Osprey (164). This count represented a decline from the record 2004 count of 184 for this common early-season migrant, but the 2005 total is still well above the three-year average count of 138. The 2005 passage rate of 0.22 birds per hour was also slightly above the average three-year rate of 0.20 per hour. This was a second very strong year in a row for this species. Otherwise, this was a pretty typical flight year for Ospreys. The high count of 15 occurred on 21 September. September was the top month. The last bird was recorded on 23 October. This year's strong result seems to indicate that the big increase in 2004 was not a fluke. Active recovery efforts across the Midwest for this species may well be partially responsible for the higher counts of the last two seasons. As usual, this species flew in numbers on south-wind days in September (particularly just ahead of cold fronts).

Northern Harrier (349). This count constituted a new season record, and it was well above the 2003–2005 three-year average count of 304 birds. The passage rate of 0.48 birds per hour in 2005 was slightly above the three-year average rate of 0.44 birds per hour. The 2005 rate, however, was actually slightly down from the 2004 passage rate of 0.50 birds per hour. October was overwhelmingly the top month in 2005 for this common mid-season migrant, which meant that many harriers moved south earlier this sea-

son. The peak flight of 42 birds occurred on 5 October and tied the existing HNC day record. Southward passage for harriers was associated with north winds and cold fronts in 2005. The first individual was seen on 22 August. After a rough patch several years ago, harrier numbers at HNC have rebounded nicely during the last three seasons.

Bald Eagle (1,058). This count constituted a new season record, and it was well above the three-year average of 971. After several seasons, the 1,000-eagle plateau was finally achieved in 2005. This benchmark denotes Hitchcock as one of the top three to five hawk watches in the world for this species, which is HNC's late-season signature raptor. The 2005 passage rate of 1.45 birds per hour was also slightly above the three-year average rate of 1.41 birds per hour. Like the Turkey Vulture, the Bald Eagle seems to be demonstrating a pattern of slow steady increases at Hitchcock. The top flight month in 2005 was November — as with Northern Harrier, this indicated earlier migration. The contrast, in this regard, between 2005 and past seasons was not quite as stark (as it was with harriers), however, and December was still a fairly good month for Bald Eagles. The peak and record flight of 140 Bald Eagles occurred on 16 November. The first individual was spotted on 28 August. Powerful cold fronts with strong NW winds are best for flights of this abundant late-season migrant at Hitchcock. The November and December experience of watching packs of eagles first appear over Far Bluff and then move down the western rim of the Loess Hills and past Hitchcock's hawk tower is unforgettable.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (1,153). This count constituted a new season record for this annually abundant mid-season migrant, and was somewhat above the three-year average count of 1,062. The 2005 passage rate of 1.58 birds per hour was also slightly higher than the three-year average passage rate of 1.55 birds per hour. The rather shallow peak flight of 93 birds occurred somewhat early on 25 September. For the first time during the three-year full coverage period, September replaced October as the peak month, once again supporting 2005's broader trend toward earlier migration. This species too seems to be demonstrating a pattern of slightly steady increases at Hitchcock. In 2005, Sharp-shinned Hawk migration was associated more strongly with cold fronts and northerly winds than in many past seasons.

Cooper's Hawk (207). This was one of the minority of raptor species that had a relatively poor season in 2005 at Hitchcock. The 2005 count of 207 birds was somewhat below the average three-year count of 216. Passage rates were below average to an even greater extent. A common early-season migrant, the Cooper's Hawk's timeline was similar in 2005 to what it has been in the past. September was the top month, and the peak flight of 24 occurred on 22 September. This species has not really established any firm trend at Hitchcock in terms of count totals, either during the three full coverage years or before. Migration for this species is associated with cold fronts and northerly winds.

Northern Goshawk (3). Only three birds (all adults) were recorded this season. The first was seen on 30 September and the last two were seen on 16 November. The three-year average season total is seven birds for this occasional mid-to-late season migrant, so this was quite a poor year for this species. Passage rates were, in this year of record coverage hours, very poor. The irruptive nature of Northern Goshawk migration is well-known, but the fact that an increasing percentage of birds seen over the past three years have been adults may indicate poor reproductive success. Hitchcock's counts for this species, however, are generally so low that our data is not a reliable barometer of how this species is faring. Northern Goshawk migration in 2005 was, as usual, somewhat associated with the passage of cold fronts.

Red-shouldered Hawk (5). The average count for this occasional mid-season migrant is six birds over the 2003–2005 span, so this was a slightly below average year for this species. Four of the birds recorded in 2005 were immatures. All the individuals seen this year were singles, recorded between 9 September and 19 October. October was the top month and no red-shouldereds were seen in November, usually a pretty good month (as that is defined at Hitchcock) for this species. This again buttresses the notion of broad-spectrum, early raptor migration this season. As usual, this species turned up randomly and unpredictably with regard to weather patterns, but it almost always flew on the off-wind side of the ridge with most birds moving through low — behaving more like accipters than buteos. This was pretty typical behavior for migrating red-shouldereds at an interior ridge system site.

Broad-winged Hawk (1,682). This was a new season record for this common-to-abundant early-season migrant and the single most unexpected result of the season. This species, in general, is hard to predict at Hitchcock. Peak flights often occur on days that are seemingly unsuitable and this was the case again this year. The main flight of broad-wingeds, however, always occurs before the main flight of Swainson's Hawks. Hitchcock is generally too far west to get big counts of Broad-winged Hawks — the staple species of many interior ridge system sites in eastern North America. The 2004 HNC season total had been 358 birds, and the 2003 count had been only 121 birds. Hurricanes have been known to push broad-wingeds westward, however, and there was an active and tragic hurricane season this year. Prevailing easterly winds around the time of these birds' big push may also have contributed to the huge count this year at HNC. The record peak flight of 660 occurred on 24 September. September was the top month. The timing of this year's atypically big flight was average in every way. The last bird was seen on 13 October. The three-year average for broad-wingeds at Hitchcock is now 720 birds with an average passage rate of one bird per hour. This year's passage rate was 2.3 birds per hour. This year's big flight included no less than eight dark morph Broad-winged Hawks. This was also an unusually high count, but this increase was in proportion to the high overall broad-winged count this season.

Swainson's Hawk (3,648). This was a new season record for this abundant early-season migrant. Aside from 5 October, this species had a very typical flight. Its peak migration at Hitchcock is, annually, very strongly associated with cold fronts and northerly winds during an extraordinarily tight temporal window (27 September–5 October). Approximately 98% of HNC's Swainson's Hawks migrated within that temporal window in autumn 2005; this is a pretty typical percentage. The record 1,878 birds seen on 5 October, however, really changed how the 2005 season played out for this species. The first large flight of 905 on 28 September had been predicted to the day and, at least generally, as to volume. The three-year average count is 2,312; the three-year average passage rate is 3.42 birds per hour. The 2005 passage rate was 5.0 birds per hour. Our current theory is that a massive early October snowstorm in the western Dakotas followed by strong WNW and NW winds gave a sudden hard eastward and southward push to birds that had been lingering due to mild temperatures. This must have redirected birds that usually pass southward over Nebraska through the Loess Hills on 5 October. October was the top month for this species due to the massive flight on the 5th. The first Swainson's Hawk was recorded on 7 September, and the last Swainson's Hawk of the season was recorded on 15 October. This species' migratory timing bucked the broader early trend and was on the slightly later side of average. Ten dark morph Swainson's Hawks and ten

rufous morph Swainson's Hawks (Figure 1) were recorded this season; as usual though, many others were probably missed in large kettles. Despite its easterly location in relation to this species' range, Hitchcock Nature Center has clearly shown itself to be one of the best hawk watch sites (outside of Texas) in the United States for this species. The recent rising counts at Hitchcock may also reflect a comeback from the massive insecticide-related poisoning that this species suffered on its South American wintering grounds until recently. The peak Swainson's Hawk migration is, annually, the much-anticipated high-point of the autumn hawk watch season at HNC.

Red-tailed Hawk (4,426). This was a new season record for this abundant mid-to-late season migrant. This species may be one case where the new tower may lead to increased counts in the future. With better views to the north, many kiting red-taileds that would have earlier been dismissed as locals or wintering birds were revealed to be temporarily pausing migrants. Thus, this sort of total may become more typical in the future. The 2005 passage rate was a healthy 6.6 birds per hour. The three-year average seasonal count has been 3,541 birds with an average passage rate of 5.16 birds per hour. This species is, in many ways, the annual keystone species at Hitchcock with large flights possible throughout the majority of the season and at least a few migrant red-taileds moving throughout the entire autumn. Unlike many other species at Hitchcock in 2005, the migratory timing of the Red-tailed Hawk flight was on a slightly later side of normal. The record peak flight of 515 birds occurred on 20 October and October was the top flight month for this species. Hitchcock is one of the top hawk watches in the world for red-taileds both in terms of the large number of birds recorded and the incredible variety of the red-taileds seen moving south past Hitchcock. Included in this year's flight were the following notables: nine western rufous morphs, 38 western dark morphs, 15 Krider's, five Harlan's light morphs, 93 Harlan's dark morphs, 12 indeterminate dark morphs and four intergrades (of various types). This is a species that continues to post steady or increasing numbers at Hitchcock. Red-tailed migration at HNC is associated with cold fronts and northerly winds.

Rough-legged Hawk (30). This uncommon late-season migrant posted below average numbers in 2005 despite above average amounts of snow cover (which has been associated with good flights of this species in the past). The average count over the three-year span at HNC is 39 birds; 2005 passage rates were even less than average. Otherwise, the flight was fairly typical. The first Rough-legged Hawk was recorded on 22 October, and the typically shallow peak flight of three occurred on 8 December. Only five dark-morph rough-leggeds were recorded (16.7% of the flight) in 2005. This is a fairly typical result for Hitchcock and seems to indicate that the birds seen at HNC originate in the western portion of the North American Arctic. It is not uncommon for more easterly hawk watch sites in North America to experience rough-legged flights in which 40 to 50% of the birds are dark morphs. Rough-legged migration at HNC does not seem particularly tied to any set of conditions, including wind direction or wind strength. Thus, the appearance of this species on any given day is hard to predict. Like other species of the far north, it is also an irruptive migrant with its numbers at times varying unpredictably from season to season.

Ferruginous Hawk (2). This species is a mid-to-late season migrant and the rarest annual raptor visitor to Hitchcock; it posted a count in 2005 that was exactly the same as the 2003 and 2004 counts. Both birds seen in 2005, a light morph adult on 17 October and a dark morph immature on 23 November, were recorded on days with strong WNW

winds (generated by the backside of a low pressure system and a Pacific cold front respectively). The first bird, a huge and heavily-marked (probable) female, provided perhaps the most memorable individual raptor sighting of the season as it crested the knoll and then powered through fairly low along the interior line of Westridge and mingled with a flock of southbound American Crows flying just east of Badger Ridge as the respective ridgelines they were following converged and then ended just north of Rahel Wildlife Area. The hawk and the apparently baffled and intimidated crows were last seen headed southeast over the lake on the Rahel property. There was snow cover (again associated with this species in the past) for neither Ferruginous Hawk sighting in 2005. Passage rates declined slightly due to the increased coverage hours in 2005. The ability to be able to better guess when these magnificent raptors (and Iowa rarities) might appear is one of the challenges we'll be working on during the off-season. In 2005, the October sighting was the 2nd earliest in HNC history, and the November sighting was very typical in timing. Northerly winds, particularly with a westerly component, have generally been associated with this species' infrequent appearances at HNC.

Golden Eagle (22). This uncommon mid-to-late season migrant turned in a slightly below average count in 2005 with a more definite dip in passage rates. The three-year average count for this species at HNC is 25. Otherwise, the flight was fairly typical. The first Golden Eagle showed up on 21 October and the peak flight of five (which tied the HNC day record for this species) occurred on 7 November. November was the top month. Like the Turkey Vulture and the Osprey, the Golden Eagle seems to do as well or better tacking into southerly winds as it does flying on the northwesterlies associated with cold fronts. The flight on 7 November, which featured light WSW winds and a total count of less than 50 migrant raptors, was a fairly typical good day for this species. The Golden Eagle is often missed by more knowledgeable birders who come to HNC in November looking for it on cold front days and often seen by more casual visitors who venture out to the hawk watch on some of November's less cold and blustery days. This species' numbers have been fairly steady at HNC over the years with the exception of the big count of 36 in 2004.

American Kestrel (166). This species posted a somewhat above average count in 2005 if one considers only the last three full-coverage years. The 2003–2005 average for this common early-season migrant is 140 birds. The three-year average passage rate is 0.20 birds per hour. The 2005 passage rate was 0.23 birds per hour. The peak flight of 31 occurred a bit early on 13 September. September was, as usual, the top month. The seven-year picture for this species is much bleaker, however, with a pattern of decline documented over the 1999–2005 period. Many hawk watches in eastern North America have also seen dramatic drops in counts of this species over the last two decades or so. The more favorable 2003–2005 data for Hitchcock may, however, indicate that this species' decline at HNC may be cyclic and/or is leveling off. Kestrel migration was associated with cold fronts in 2005.

Merlin (23). This uncommon and unpredictable migrant showed up in below average numbers in 2005. The three-year average count is 28; the 2005 passage rate for Merlins was below average to an even greater extent. The Merlin seems to display no consistent overall pattern of increase or decrease at Hitchcock with bad years often following strong years and vice versa. It also displays no strong association with cold fronts or any other type of weather pattern. Flight timing in 2005 was fairly typical, however, with the first bird recorded a bit early on 7 September, but with the two typically shallow peak

flights of three birds occurring on the very average dates of 28 September and 4 October. The Merlin is basically an early-to-mid-season migrant. As usual at HNC though, a few Merlins continued to trickle through in the late season. Both Taiga and Prairie Merlins were seen during the fall 2005 season. This species is perhaps the most annually enigmatic raptor migrant at HNC.

Peregrine Falcon (44). This was a new season record and was well above the three-year average count of 36 for this uncommon early-season migrant. The three-year average passage rate is 0.05 birds per hour; the 2005 passage rate was 0.06 birds per hour. This species has demonstrated a pattern of slow steady increases over the 2003–2005 full coverage span at HNC. September was, as usual, the top flight month. The peak flight was, however, slightly late — eight birds were recorded during the massive raptor blitz of 5 October. The last Peregrine Falcon of 2005 was quite late on 16 November. The first two had been recorded on 12 September. In 2005, migration was more strongly associated with cold fronts than it has been in some past seasons.

Prairie Falcon (7). This occasional mid-to-late season migrant posted a record count in 2005, capping a pattern of slow steady increases over the three-year full coverage period. Rounding up to the nearest full bird, the average count over the 2003–2005 period is six birds. Passage rates were also very slightly up in 2005. All seven birds in 2005 were singles seen between 24 October and 1 December. The flight timing this season was fairly typical, though this species flew with or behind cold fronts much more exclusively than it had in the past.

Unidentified raptors (32). This number is well below the 2003–2005 average count of 59 per season. The number of unidentified raptors has steadily declined over the years at HNC just as overall raptor counts have steadily increased. This seems to indicate increased skill and/or increased audacity on the part of Hitchcock's hawk watchers!

THE NONRAPTOR FLIGHT

During the fall 2005 Hitchcock hawk watch season, 139 species of birds (other than the twenty species of raptors already noted) migrated past or were seen or heard around the hawk watch. Of these 139 species, the following sightings can be deemed moderately to quite notable: Western Tanager, Sandhill Crane, Bonaparte's Gull, Short-eared Owl, Western Kingbird, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Cerulean Warbler, Black Tern, Prothonotary Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Loon, Black-bellied Plover, Purple Finch, Ross's Goose, and Lapland Longspur. Western Tanager, Black Tern, and Prothonotary Warbler were additions to the HNC park list in fall 2005. As always, despite their apparent specificity, our counts of migrant nonraptor migrants should be taken as estimates and not as definitive counts (like our raptor counts) based on strict protocols.

I have divided the twenty annually most abundant nonraptor migrant species at HNC into four categories with season totals in parentheses.

Waterfowl and Waterbirds

This category provided a solid performance with two strong exceptions. For **Canada Geese** (10,903) and **Greater White-fronted Geese** (2,599), this was an excellent flight year. It was a bounce back year for **Snow Geese** (134,257), but this still was well short of the peak flight years of several years ago as their route south in the fall appears to have shifted westward in recent years. **Double-crested Cormorants** (11,374) posted a good if unspectacular total for the 2005 season. The two abundant gull species, **Franklin's Gulls**

(36,096) and **Ring-billed Gulls** (5,549), enjoyed banner flights with the numbers of the former more-or-less overwhelming raptor-obsessed counters on two huge days. The two sharp exceptions to the generally positive trends in this category were the poor count of **Mallards** (3,029) and the very poor count of **American White Pelicans** (5,205). The lack of strong fronts early in the season and this latter species' recent troubles with disease and poor reproductive success may have combined to produce the worst pelican flight in Hitchcock history. The poor Mallard count may have been a product of the combination of lingering mild temperatures followed by a fast and hard freeze. Furthermore, duck counts at Hitchcock are always problematic because so many ducks pass too far away from the hawk counters to be identified as to species.

Early Season Passerines

Three out of five species in this category had poor flights in 2005. The lack of early fronts may well have led to more birds in this category drifting through slowly on a broad front or migrating more exclusively at night. **Common Nighthawks** (557) and **Chimney Swifts** (3,514), two of the poor performers, may also be suffering broad population declines continent-wide. The drop in the number of Chimney Swifts this year was particularly steep. **Eastern Kingbirds** (206) also suffered a precipitous drop this year. The two species that appeared in excellent and good numbers respectively were **Blue Jays** (18,391) and **Red-headed Woodpeckers** (661). The big rebound for Blue Jays was particularly notable after a number of years of poor or mediocre flights. The continued solid flights of Red-headed Woodpeckers in early September at Hitchcock, and the fact that immatures once again composed over 50% of the flight in 2005, are heartening in light of the continuing concern over this species.

Late-Middle Season Passerines

Two out of three species in this category fared well. **American Crows** (46,492) continued to rebound from much lower counts a few seasons ago, which were possibly due to losses from West Nile Virus. **American Robins** (35,570) also posted very solid numbers. The total for **Eastern Bluebirds** (359) was, however, one of the most disappointing counts of the entire season; we saw no large flocks of this species at all this year. This poor result is something of a mystery as the weather conditions don't seem to account for the decline, and there is little current concern for bluebird populations after their rebound of the last decade plus.

Icterids and Starlings

This category was defined, across the board, by very poor counts in 2005, continuing a trend of recent seasons. The causes of the declining counts for these four species are not clear. **Rusty Blackbirds** (293) have, in past seasons, recorded single day counts of more than 1,000 birds. That pretty much says it all in terms of just how badly this species fared this year. If the count for Rusty Blackbirds was abysmal, the 2005 season count for **Red-winged Blackbirds** (17,733) was indescribable. This is a species that several years ago was annually counted in at the 250,000–500,000 bird range at HNC. The **Common Grackle** (66,297) has experienced a similarly cataclysmic drop; we used to range from 500,000 to 1,500,000 of these annually. Why these declines are happening at HNC over the last several years is hard to say. Some of the best roosting habitat for these birds near Hitchcock has been destroyed, and there is some scattered evidence that there may have

been shifts in migration routes (similar to the better documented case with Snow Geese). Expanded poisoning programs funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to protect crops may also have taken a toll. There are no definite answers, however, to be gathered at a hawk watch like Hitchcock to these sorts of questions.

Another big decliner in 2005 was **European Starling** (12,021). We used to see about 100,000 of these birds per season. Unlike the icterid species, however, we do not miss these nonnatives in the least. They also do not seem to have massively infested Hitchcock as a wintering ground in 2005 the way that they have in the past two winters.

Other Notable Day Counts

Other notable counts for migrant nonraptors included 21 southbound **Black Terns** (with one still in breeding plumage) on 19 August, and 20 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** very late in the day on 13 September. A **red-shafted race Northern Flicker** was seen headed south on 1 October (spotted first by Pat Williams who definitely has a knack for finding these birds). Migrating **Great Egrets** (16) were counted on 28 September — 13 of these coming at once in a small tight V-formation and accompanied by a trailing Great Blue Heron. That trailing heron was one of 43 **Great Blue Herons** that winged south on 28 September amid the kettles of Swainson's Hawks and streams of Franklin's Gulls. A total of 14 **Black-bellied Plovers** moved through with the Red-tailed Hawks, American Crows, and American Robins on 19 October. The big Bald Eagle and Snow Goose flights of 16 November were accompanied by a strong push of an estimated 1,500 **Horned Larks** and 500 **Lapland Longspurs**. The strong Bald Eagle push on 29 November was accompanied by a massive waterfowl flight that included four **Ross's Geese** and a lone unidentified swan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the Hitchcock hawk watch has grown over the years, so have the demands on the great HNC staff. Huge thanks go out to Brett Ford, Chad Graeve, Tina Popson, and Kelly Herek. Your sterling efforts on behalf of this increasingly complex and time-consuming project are greatly appreciated! Thanks as well to Administrative Director Cindy Thompson, Executive Director Mark Shoemaker, all the rest of the staff and members of the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, and to the Iowa West Foundation for your continued financial and moral support and the planning and funding of the new hawk tower! Thanks also to Peter Soby of *KETV-Omaha* and to Mark Davis of the *Omaha World Herald* for their wonderful and thoughtful coverage of the Hitchcock hawk watch project in 2005.

The core group of hawk watchers (those who regularly turn out and count at Hitchcock) has grown a bit over the years, but still numbered only eighteen people in 2005. Thus, the effort of those eighteen folks was truly massive for the watch to log a record 730 count hours. Big thanks, in no particular order to Don Maas, Shirley Maas, Jim Meyer, Sandy Reinkin, Jerry Toll, Pat Williams, Clem Klaphake, Don Paseka, Janis Paseka, Jori How, Loren Padelford, Babs Padelford, Phylisha Wolfe, Sue Mattix, Mary Kramer, Steve Davis, Mark Orsag, and Bill Johnson. Our condolences go out to Hitchcock hawk watcher Carr Heaney who suffered a personal loss in 2005.

Thanks also to a whole series of folks who counted or otherwise helped out at the hawk watch at various times this year — Donna Rahel, Jack Schmid, Jason McGuinn, Brandy Lively, Aaron Brees, Jim Sinclair, Diana Pesek, Paul Roisen, Paul Hertzel, Greg

Hoverstein, Pam Allen, Reid Allen, John Mancini, Marilyn Mancini, Duane Bright, Mary Clausen, Larry Brockstreet, Nancy Leonard, Urban Leonard, Mark Anderson, Laurie Wells, Al Reyter, Cindy Reyter, Bob Fuchs, John Ruud, Scott Ross, Stan How, Leslie Sorenson, Leo Silverman, Dick Pochard, all the folks at Loess Hills Audubon, Burroughs Audubon (Kansas), and the IAN (Iowa Naturalist Educators Association) conferees, as well as to the hundreds of visitors throughout the season (including those from Australia, England, and the Philippines), and to everyone else that helped out and that (sorry!) I've forgotten here.

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Green Violet-ear, First Iowa Record

Lyle and Marlene Neher

Weeks come and go and sometimes it is hard to remember what happened at a particular time. But 27 September to 4 October 2005 is a week we will always remember. A very special hummingbird came to our kitchen window feeder. And as if its presence was not enough, it brought to our home many wonderful, nature-loving people.

We were at the kitchen table eating breakfast watching for the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that had been visiting our window feeder when a large, dark green hummingbird appeared. It came suddenly and then darted away quickly, giving us little time to try to identify it. We really didn't think it would be back so we went about our day's work wondering what it was. But it did come back. Marlene noticed it a number of times during the day and it returned the next morning. Its visits were brief and skittish, and rain on the window that morning made it difficult to identify. It looked much like a Magnificent Hummingbird, but we couldn't see a white spot behind the eye. We called a birding friend who promised to come later that day and gave us instructions to take as many photographs as we could.

By the end of that day several birders had come, some taking digital photographs, which helped identify the bird as a Green Violet-ear. (See cover photograph.) The sighting was posted to the Iowa listserv and we were told that we could expect many more visitors the next day. Our memorable week had begun!

For the duration of the week the Green Violet-ear came to the feeder with predictable regularity. From 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. it fed about every 10 to 30 minutes, feeding a little more often in the mornings than in the afternoons. People from all over Iowa and seven other states and one person from Ontario, Canada came to our kitchen to view this little wonder. We pushed the kitchen table away from the window to make room for

our guests and so they could get a good view. We were relieved each time the bird came, and each time it left we wondered if we would see it again. It was very special to share in the excitement as 195 people came to see our tiny visitor. Ten came to view the bird more than once, and ten came to see the bird after it left.

We are just so glad that we noticed the bird and took time to identify it. We treasure all the new friends we made as we shared the sighting of this special little bird. It was a great privilege to see such a rare bird at our feeder — a new bird for the life lists of many who came and a first Iowa record for the Green Violet-ear. You just never know what a week will bring!

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Royal Tern at Lake Rathbun

Stephen J. Dinsmore and Jay Gilliam

Figure 1. Royal Tern at Lake Rathbun, Appanoose*, 20 August 2005. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.*

On 20 August 2005, we observed and photographed an adult Royal Tern (***Sterna maxima***) at Lake Rathbun in Appanoose County (Figure 1 and page 37). We spent a couple of hours birding west along the south shore of the lake, finding a few scattered gull flocks but nothing of note. At about 3:30 P.M., we arrived at the bay adjacent to the Southfork Park Recreation Area and quickly noticed a large group of gulls and terns loafing on an island at the mouth of the bay. As we were preparing to walk closer, we jokingly commented that this would be a great place to find something like a Royal Tern! Within a couple of minutes we had walked down to the adjacent shore and carefully began scoping the birds from a moderate (400–500 m) distance. After a few minutes, a large tern, slightly smaller than a Caspian Tern and showing a white forehead and distinctly orange-yellow bill color caught our eye. The bird was facing straight away from us into the wind and we had to wait nearly 10 minutes to get a good look at the bird and confirm our suspicions — it was a Royal Tern! The bird eventually walked into plain view, made a short flight to another part of the island, and then flew out of sight to the northeast at 4:40 P.M. One complete subsequent search of the lake failed to turn up the bird, but we eventually relocated it at 6:48 P.M. off the dam. We watched it here and then farther west off Islandview Park until 7:40 P.M. when we last saw the bird flying west towards the location of the original sighting.

The following description was compiled from our field observations and subsequent examination of photos. The bird was slightly smaller (an estimated 10%) than a Caspian Tern with slightly shorter legs and a slimmer overall appearance. The bill was dull orange; it was roughly the same length as the bill of a Caspian Tern, but much thinner at the base, and the culmen was less curved. The forehead and top of the crown were white with a few remaining black flecks on the crown. There was a small black smudge anterior to the eye; the remaining area surrounding the eye was white, appearing as a narrow but broken eye ring. This black color extended to the rear of the eye forming a black "goggle" and crest. The remainder of the head was white. The mantle and upperwings were pale gray except that the outer primaries were black and there was a faint darker trailing edge to the secondaries. The underwing pattern was distinctive with pale (essentially white) underwing coverts and secondaries, black on at least the two outer primaries, and black tips to the next 3–4 primaries. Seen in flight, the rump was white and contrasted with the pale gray upperwings and tail. The underparts were entirely white. The legs were black.

One of the most distinctive features of this bird was the stage of molt, and this alone set this bird apart from the Caspian Terns that were present. The tertials and scapulars were frayed and showed darker subterminal marks on a couple of tertials. The flight feathers were also heavily worn, as evidenced by the broken tips to a couple of primaries, a couple of missing secondaries, and the black color (apparently a result of feather wear) of the outer two primaries. On the basis of the molt pattern, we concluded that this was an adult (after second year) Royal Tern that had nearly completed the molt to basic plumage (Olsen and Larsson 1995).

Only two similar looking terns could occur in Iowa. Caspian Tern is larger and has a thicker and deeper red-colored bill, a different pattern of black on the underwing, lacks a shaggy crest, and would exhibit a much different molt pattern and timing of molt. Elegant Tern is the species most likely to be confused with Royal Tern and was ruled out on the basis of its smaller size, deeper red or orange-red bill color, much different bill structure, and longer crest.

The bird remained at Rathbun Reservoir through 14 September. This represents the first accepted record of a Royal Tern in Iowa, and one of just a few reports of this species in the Upper Midwest. Given the coastal habits of this species, it is fun to ponder how it ended up in Iowa. Hurricanes occasionally deposit coastal birds far inland, and the 2005 hurricane season was the most active in history. However, most birds displaced by tropical storms linger only a day or two or perish. Prior to this individual's appearance in Iowa, only two tropical storms had affected the U.S. Gulf Coast and had a storm track that might have displaced a bird to Iowa — Tropical Storm Cindy on 5 July and Hurricane Dennis on 10 July. However, both of these storms tracked well to the east of Iowa, preceded the sighting by some 5–6 weeks, and seem unlikely as a source for this bird.

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Black Vulture in Hazleton

Sondra Cabell

Figure 1. Black Vulture rescued in Hazleton, IA on 21 November 2005 and being held by Jodeane Cancilla at Macbride Raptor Center, Coralville. Photograph by John Schafer, Coralville, IA.

On 21 November, I received a call, like many others, of an injured bird — this time a vulture in Hazleton. When I called back, they said it had flown off. Shortly afterward, a man came into the nature center saying he had an injured vulture he had found in his backyard in Hazleton and the cats were all surrounding it. (I believe it was the same bird reported earlier.) When I went to his car, I was surprised to see a Black Vulture (Figure 1). I had worked with Turkey Vultures and had been familiar with Black Vultures from time working in KY, GA, and SC. We transferred it to a carry case and observed a thin bird with no visible injuries. In checking, I found this was even more unusual than I had first thought: only two records were listed in Kent and Dinsmore (1996). When I called Macbride Raptor center, they were sure that I must have an immature turkey vulture, but agreed to take the bird. After transporting it to Cedar Rapids, they agreed that it was indeed a Black Vulture. The vulture was taken to the Minnesota Raptor Center where they determined it was blind in one eye, nonreleasable, and they were looking for a placement location. This is the first Black Vulture in Iowa documented by a photograph.

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Brown Pelican in Central Iowa

Stephen J. Dinsmore and James J. Dinsmore

Figure 1. Brown Pelican at Red Rock Reservoir, Marion*, 22 October 2005. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.*

During the fall of 2005 a Brown Pelican was present for almost three months at Saylorville and Red Rock reservoirs in central Iowa (Figure 1). At 2:02 P.M. on 30 July 2005, we discovered a Brown Pelican loafing with American White Pelicans on the mudflats of Jester County Park at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The bird was little more than half the size of an American White Pelican, which it otherwise resembled in shape and proportions. The bird had a pale gray bill that was an estimated half the length of its body and possessed a distinct "pouch" below the lower mandible. The upperparts were generally dark brown, except for paler (off-white) patches on the sides of the hind crown and nape and pale edges to the upper secondary coverts. The breast was also dark brown, but the remainder of the underparts was white. The legs were dark-colored. In flight, the bird showed the characteristic "plank-like" wings (the inner primaries and secondaries were heavily worn, possibly from molt) and a dark tail. During subsequent observations, we saw the bird plunge-dive several times. On the basis of the muted white on the head, generally dark brown plumage, and molt stage, we aged the bird as a first-year Brown Pelican. This individual remained at Saylorville Reservoir through at least 1 October.

On 22 October 2005, SJD and Paul Skrade discovered a Brown Pelican below the dam of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. The bird accompanied several American White Pelicans and was actively feeding and plunge-diving in the tailrace. Based on plumage, feather wear, and the timing and proximity to the Saylorville Reservoir sighting we concluded that it was almost certainly the same individual. The bird was last seen here on 23 November. What makes the story even more interesting is that both of these sightings probably pertain to a Brown Pelican first seen by Ed Thelen at the north end of Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, from 14–18 July. It's not very often that you can track the movement of an individual bird across the state!

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Birding Brookside Park in Ames

Shane S. Patterson

Situated in the middle of a university town in central Iowa, there exists a hotspot for neotropical migrants. A variety of flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, and warblers visit this wooded sanctuary while traveling to and from distant wintering grounds. At first glance, though, one might deem Brookside Park to have little wildlife habitat. Indeed, the various pavilions, playground structures, and sports fields visible from the entrance seem to belie a place that holds multitudes of songbirds in migration. However, this popular park does, in fact, harbor valuable bird habitat beyond the more traditional components.

Various elements contribute to Brookside's attractiveness to birds. Squaw Creek, which passes through the eastern part of the park, appears as a ribbon of trees in a predominantly open landscape outside the city. More heavily wooded than much of central Iowa, this riparian stretch swells to a sizeable block of floodplain woods at the north end of Brookside. Upstream, two other riparian belts feed into Squaw Creek, while the larger Skunk River corridor lies just a short distance to the east. Ames itself is a comparative haven of trees in this part of the state, with Brookside positioned as a vital element of the city's greenbelts.

Due in part to its centralized urban location, the park has thus far avoided the fate of many other Iowa woodlands, whose understories have been browsed into submission by deer. By the same token, invasive shrubs like bush honeysuckle (***Lonicera* spp.**) and multiflora rose (***Rosa multiflora***) are less common here, allowing more desirable plants to flourish. Hence, location and even site quality may contribute to the park's status as a prominent migrant trap.

Another significant woodland is preserved along the Clear Creek greenbelt in west Ames, and there are many other areas in town that produce interesting birds. Few offer the convenience and easy navigation of Brookside, though. Most of all, we know so much about how to bird the park based on the considerable amount of data collected there in recent years. Comprehensive studies of warbler migration at Brookside Park, conducted from 1982 to 1986, helped to further our knowledge of the seasonal abundance and distribution of warblers in Iowa (Martsching 1986, 1987). In fact, some of Martsching's peak counts and early/late migration dates still endure as standards. His studies also solidified the park's status as a migration hotspot — one worth monitoring on a yearly basis. In that regard, Fix (1990) described a remarkable Point Pelee-like experience at Brookside on a flooded day in May. Additionally, many of the park's interesting sightings are archived in ***Birds of Story County*** (Dinsmore and Zaletel 2001) and ***Birds in Iowa*** (Kent and Dinsmore 1996), as well as in seasonal birding publications (e.g., ***North American Birds***).

DIRECTIONS TO BROOKSIDE PARK

The entrance to Brookside is located along 6th Street in central Ames, immediately east of Elwood Drive and several blocks west of Grand Avenue (Figure 1). To reach this area, begin with U.S. highway 30, which serves as an expedient artery through south Ames. Exit north from this divided highway onto Elwood Dr., and then follow Elwood up to 6th Street. After making a right turn at a traffic light on 6th Street, Brookside Park

will be on your left immediately following a railroad underpass. This is a surprisingly direct route that allows access to the interior of Ames, without the added hassle of mid-town traffic. (This route is less advisable on days of Iowa State University football games or other events that lead to concentrations of traffic along Elwood Dr. In such cases, use Grand Avenue by way of 13th Street, which connects to Interstate 35. Heading west on 6th Street from Grand then leads to the park's entrance.) After entering Brookside Park, turn left and proceed past several baseball diamonds around to a final parking lot. From this convenient position, you can start birding as soon as you step out of your vehicle.

SPRING AND FALL MIGRATION

Spring (April–May) and fall (Aug–Oct), when songbirds are on the move, offer the best times to bird Brookside Park. One way to begin a spring/fall walk is to explore a nice stand of oaks beyond the parking lots and baseball fields (Figure 1.1). These trees, with their sprawling, irregular branches, allude to the savannas that once covered portions of central Iowa. Although devoid of a developed understory, this oak grove, along with an assortment of hickories, hackberries, maples, and ash, still features waves of songbirds in spring and fall. In particular, look for upper-canopy dwellers like Blue-headed Vireo,

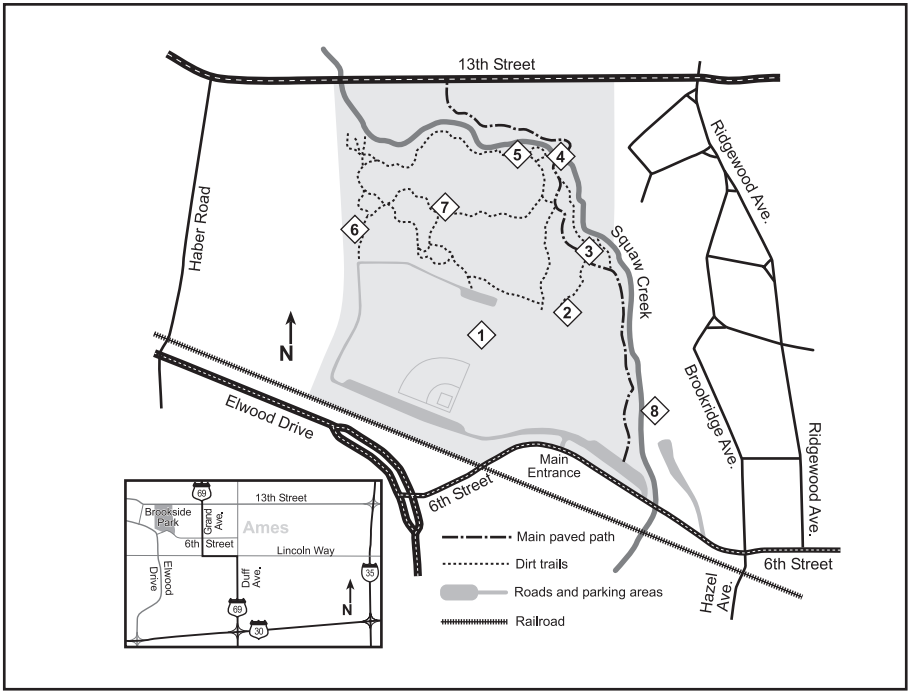

Figure 1. Brookside Park in Ames: (1) shade trees and semi-open area, (2) dense southeastern edge of woodland, (3) meadow and riparian thickets, (4) northern footbridge environs, (5) island overlook and western extent of creek-side trail, (6) park/pasture border, (7) inner woodland trails, (8) southern footbridge vicinity.

Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler, which can be easier to view here due to the semi-open nature of the habitat. The scattered hackberries seem to be especially attractive to kinglet-dominated flocks in fall. Sifting through these dynamic bunches sometimes reveals rare late-season warblers and vireos. Given the proximity to the parking lot, the area is worth at least a quick inspection before exploring the woods and streamside.

The southern edge of the woodland, located right next to the parking lot, is a useful conduit to follow. Anywhere between the lot and the shores of Squaw Creek (to the east) can be productive. Along the border, check taller trees towering above the canopy and vine tangles at all levels. These dense sections often harbor some of the most diverse assemblages of migrants at Brookside. A consistently active spot is located north of an old fire truck, which is maintained as a distinctive playground component for the community. Just a few dozen feet from this truck is an accumulation of trees and vines that comprise a natural wall of vegetation along the woods (Figure 1.2). Warblers, kinglets, vireos, and flycatchers have foraged here in impressive numbers during migration. For springtime warblers, I have found this to be one of the best places to watch colorful singing males as they move in and out of various foliage layers. Be aware that much of the vegetation along this southern edge has been torn out in recent years to create additional room for spent lumber and junk disposal. Still, enough suitable habitat remains to make this spot worth double-checking during a warbler walk.

To the east, a wide paved trail enters the main woodland. Just beyond this entrance point is a small meadow along Squaw Creek (Figure 1.3). Both the dense shrubbery along the edges and the big trees in the meadow can yield mixed-species flocks. Also check the shoreline here for Northern Waterthrush, especially in spring. At the northern extent of the opening, a narrow dirt trail leads into the woodland. This continued stretch of riparian thicket often holds thrushes (including gray-cheeked), Gray Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, and other fruit-eating species during migration, in addition to serving as another place to find mixed-species flocks.

The dirt trail soon goes across the paved path and follows the creek's course to the west. Before continuing forward on this route, search the vicinity of a large footbridge over Squaw Creek (Figure 1.4), which provides the best vantage point to scan the sky for raptors, especially Sep-Oct. Squaw Creek also serves as a temporary passageway for many other diurnal and crepuscular migrants, including aerialists like Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, and various swallow species. Besides the usual individuals foraging high above the city, Katy Patterson and I once watched a procession of Common Nighthawks in direct flight over the creek on an early September evening. One at a time they followed a resolute course, just below treetop level, staying far below their skyward counterparts. On an evening in May, we observed a Silver-haired Bat (***Lasionycteris noctivagans***) navigating slowly along this same corridor. A number of other bat species are found at Brookside, further hinting at the importance of the area to a variety of wildlife.

The trees and thickets near both ends of the bridge offer yet another location for migrant songbirds. From the bridge itself, look east to the highest snags along the canopy, where you'll see a favorite perch for Olive-sided Flycatchers in May, August, and September. Interestingly, other treetop species are sometimes seen foraging at lower levels by the bridge, thus offering birders a temporary respite from "warbler neck." And for a quick break, a park bench off of the east end is a relaxing place to observe birds in nearby shrubs and saplings.

Returning west to the woodland dirt trail, you will soon have an elevated view of a grass-brush island that has been expanding its reach within Squaw Creek in recent years (Figure 1.5). Although typically inundated during spring floods, this ever-changing habitat patch provides shelter for sparrows and wrens, including Winter Wren, in fall. The upper shoreline here enables easy viewing of these brush-loving birds as they forage. This vantage point can also hold Northern Waterthrush, which seems to favor the more open segment of stream in fall. Additionally, above the eroded shoreline, you will find one of the better places for mixed-species flocks in both spring and fall. The big trees at this spot have served as the park's most consistent spring location for Philadelphia Vireo. (**Caution**: the elevated bank near the trail is currently very steep. Please be careful. All of the habitats here and elsewhere in the park can be easily viewed without walking close to the edge. Squaw Creek's erosion rates have reached unnaturally high levels in much of the park.)

Farther west along the creek, just before the trail bears south, is another productive area for songbird waves. What makes this little corner of the woods notable is its custom of attracting Golden-winged Warblers from late August to mid-September. Numerous thrushes, along with other understory inhabitants, are drawn to this quiet stretch of floodplain habitat. Nearby thick patches of jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) produce Mourning Warblers Aug-Sep and might draw in a rare fall-season Connecticut Warbler. The tubular flowers on these plants also harbor a preferred food source of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in summer and fall.

As the path heads away from Squaw Creek, a horse pasture becomes visible to the west. This open area, while not part of Brookside Park (and off-limits to the public), can still be viewed from the trail, especially along the southwest section (Figure 1.6). Big trees along the edge attract mixed-species flocks, while thick grass near this park-pasture border often holds concentrations of sparrows in fall. Watch for Fox, Song, Lincoln's, White-throated, Harris's, and White-crowned Sparrows as they flush and perch in low branches. The assortment is similar to what is found at the island area, only in larger numbers here. Late in the day, when many of the sparrows are gathering to roost, is usually the best time to bird this pasture-woodland border, if you can avoid gazing into the sun. To the south, the trail concludes at the woodland edge, where a narrow line of thorny trees extends southward along the entrance road. Northern Mockingbirds have found their way to this dense fencerow on a few occasions in May.

On any spring/fall trip to Brookside, make sure to carefully bird the brushy, forb-rich trails in the heart of the woodland (Figures 1.7 and 2). Swarms of warblers, often led by Tennessee, chestnut-sided, black-and-white, and American Redstart, characterize this interior area in late August and early September (Figure 3). Such early-fall flocks usually contain a few Canada Warblers, too. Investigating the thick undergrowth around old treefalls is a key to finding Winter Wrens, thrushes, Ovenbirds, and interesting *Oporornis* warblers (Figures 4 and 5). There are many dirt trails that enable access to the inner woodland, with some that connect directly to the parking lot, paved path, and creek-side corridor. Along with its various offshoots, a trail that progresses east/west through the center of the woods is notably productive at times for warblers, including Kentucky Warbler (spring), Connecticut Warbler (spring), and Mourning Warbler (spring and fall). The bold, cadenced songs of these sought-after skulkers often reveal their presence in May, when a patient observer has the best chance of observing them. A related trail parallels the paved path in the northeastern section and links the inner woodland to the

Figure 2. The inner woodland of Brookside Park, 9 September 2005. Photograph by Shane S. Patterson, Ames, IA.

*Figure 3. During spring and fall, Brookside Park comes alive with neotropical migrants. Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) at White Oak Conservation Area,* Mahaska, *16 October 2005. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA*

creek-side route. As always, please stay on these woodland trails to help ensure a healthy understory. Squaw Creek's growing white-tailed deer herds will take care of the trampling for us.

Lastly, you can walk south along the paved path to search more open parts of the park (Figure 1.8). The length of the riparian zone offers habitat similar to the meadow edge, while large shade trees draw in migrant waves from all areas. In late fall, the open ground around the pavilions has attracted huge foraging flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos. This gives you some place beyond your feeder to mull over the identification of "Oregon" and Oregon look-alikes. A small parking area on the opposite side of the creek, reached by crossing the southern footbridge, offers a comparable situation, but with plenty of other species included.

OVERMIGRANTS AND RARITIES

In spring, Brookside often attracts a couple of "southeastern" songbirds. Some of the representatives recorded here include Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Summer Tanager (Dinsmore and Zaletel 2001). All of these species summer in southern and/or eastern Iowa but are less numerous in the rest of the state (Kent and Dinsmore 1996). A few individuals seen at Brookside are probably stopping along the edge of their usual migration paths to the

*Figure 4. Positioned as an urban oasis, Brookside Park attracts considerable numbers of migrant songbirds. Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) photographed at Saylorville Reservoir,* Polk*, 16 October 2004, by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

*Figure 5. The Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*) is among several southeastern species to look for at Brookside Park in spring. Photographed at the Croton Unit of Shimek State Forest,* Lee*, 21 May 2005 by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

north. However, many are likely over-migrants, or birds that have traveled beyond the usual known limits of their nesting range. Although most of these species are not guaranteed in a given spring at Brookside, suitable fallout conditions frequently produce one or two of the group. As in much of the state, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Summer Tanager are particularly strong over-migrants that are currently the most likely to be found. Southeastern species are also seen at Brookside in fall, especially hatch-year birds, but not nearly as often. Again, the riparian woodland in the northern half of the park is the place to seek out these birds during migration.

While spring is the best time for southeastern species, fall is the season in which Brookside has produced another interesting bird — the Black-throated Blue Warbler. Recently, this richly colored rarity has been observed on an almost yearly basis at Brookside from late August through October. Each of the black-throated blues that I've seen here was foraging in the southeastern part of the woods, just west of the paved path. The shaded, vine-laden tangles in the lower reaches of this section, which is bordered by the aforementioned "wall," present a nice refuge for migrant black-throated blues. Another suitable place to check for this species is the similarly dense habitat along Squaw Creek, such as the periphery of the streamside meadow.

One typical aspect of wooded urban parks that Brookside lacks is a significant number of conifer plantings, aside from a few pines in the southern part of the park. Nonetheless, Pine Warblers have frequented the area on several occasions during migra-

tion. Sifting through mixed-species flocks in just about any part of the park could yield a sighting.

WANDERERS FROM THE WEST

Perhaps the most interesting indicator of Brookside's capacity to attract wandering birds was the one-day appearance of an Acorn Woodpecker in 2005 (to be featured in the next issue). This was not only Iowa's first record, but also the easternmost documented occurrence of the species in North America (Ann Johnson, pers. comm., 2006). Other western itinerants observed at the park include Lazuli Bunting (spring 2002), Spotted Towhee (fall 2003), Varied Thrush (fall 2003), and a *pacificus*-type Winter Wren (fall 2003).

Although just about any of Iowa's recorded (or yet-to-be recorded!) forest species could show up at Brookside, Varied Thrush is a rare migrant that the park seems particularly well equipped to attract. The woodland's verdant understory could provide a welcome refuge for another Varied Thrush. Outside the woods, scattered ornamental fruit trees could lure a Bohemian Waxwing during irruption years.

THE NESTING SEASON

The birding activity at Brookside slows considerably during June and July, as most of the energetic migrants have moved on. Brookside on its own isn't large enough to hold a good diversity of nesting birds. For sure, the park's best feature is its ability to attract these migrants on their way to and from the boreal and mixed forests to the north. However, a few birds remain at Brookside to nest.

In mid- to late May, you're sure to see and hear Indigo Buntings, which often set up territories in the northern part of the park. Thickets near Squaw Creek and gaps in the woodland usually host nesting Indigo Buntings in the summer months. Look for broods or family groups from July to early September. Of course, this is also an effective means of finding young Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Other species found during summer include familiar birds like Wood Duck, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, House Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, and Common Yellowthroat. Eastern Phoebes nest underneath bridges near the park, and juveniles are readily seen in summer and early fall. Also look for pairs of Northern Rough-winged Swallows along steep banks of Squaw Creek, especially in the northern part of the park. Moreover, on spring days when migrant numbers are a bit low, one can pass time watching woodpeckers (red-bellied, downy, hairy, and Northern Flicker), Black-capped Chickadees, and White-breasted Nuthatches tending to early-season nesting duties.

Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren were new additions to central Iowa's avifauna in the twentieth century (Kent and Dinsmore 1996; Dinsmore and Zaletel 2001). Both are now seen (but mostly heard!) around Brookside on a regular basis. The latter almost certainly nests in the wooded neighborhood to the east and may do so within the park. These two, along with Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Northern Cardinal can be heard singing in the area at just about any time of year, even on chilly winter days. Likewise, resident Barred Owls vocalize year round and probably raise young in the vicinity.

A fairly recent phenomenon of Brookside's nesting season is that of Cooper's Hawks. Nesting, which has been observed at Brookside in several recent years, commences in April or May and extends into the summer months. Look for stick nests positioned in the

upper reaches of large trees, especially in the quieter western half of the woods. Observing these raptors from a comfortable distance is definitely a worthwhile experience. The presence of Cooper's Hawks, however, does put a damper on songbird activity in the occupied part of the park. Therefore, I concentrate much of my springtime birding away from a nest's vicinity, both for better birding and for the best interests of the hawks.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Keep in mind that the southern portion of Brookside is multi-use in design. Hundreds of people are sometimes present on warmer days and weekends, enjoying the array of amenities that the park has to offer. However, once I reach the woodland trails, the park takes on a more isolated feel. Again, though, please stay on the trails and do what you can to keep the woods a quiet place to visit.

Each year, Brookside delivers several great migration days with some less successful outings thrown into the mix. Productive times of birding in the park often involve lots of listening and waiting. Hopefully, this article will enable you to better maximize your time if you happen to visit. I do encourage birders to stop by Brookside if in central Iowa, especially because of the park's proximity to the ISU campus and the major freeways along Ames. Of course, I would be happy to learn of what you find on a birding trip. Finally, I encourage everyone to contribute any interesting sightings to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union's seasonal field reports, which can be found on the Iowa Birds and Birding web site at <www.iowabirds.org>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Katy Patterson for comments on previous drafts of this article. I also thank the many Brookside birders — past and present — whose findings have motivated me to explore and write about this park.

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UPCOMING MEETING OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: Spring 2006:19–21 May, Clear Lake/Ventura

FRONT COVER: Green Violet-ear, first Iowa record, Neher farm, Grundy Center, *Grundy*, 22 September 2005. Photograph by Matt Wetrich, Ames, IA.

BACK COVER: Le Conte's Sparrow, Chichaqua Wildlife Area, *Polk*, 10 October 2005. Photograph by Dick Stilwell.

DESIGN: Lynn Ekblad, Ames, IA
GRAPHICS: Richard Beachler, Boone, IA

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