IOWA BIRD LIFE

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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Meet Three Iowa Birders—Ed, Rob, and Marty Thelen

Robert I .Cecil

There must have been something about Iowa that kept the Thelen family here. Perhaps it was the opportunity, the lakes and rivers, or perhaps it was just the wild things around them. Or perhaps it was because of the preceding generations of the family that were born and stayed here.

Ed, Rob, Marty, and Tony Thelen

A Christmas visit to the home of Lenus and Jean Thelen's home in Carroll is a tribute to past generations—old toys, photos, and memorabilia. Among the most interesting are pressed plant specimens, complete with identifying nomenclature and carefully framed by Jean's mother Mary Goecke as a 14-year-old eighth grader in 1916. In 2006, the Schelle family donated the book of pressings to the Prairie Learning Center at the Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge at Prairie City near Des Moines where some are on display. Lenus and Jean have six children including four sons and two daughters. Lenus shared with them his enjoyment of the outdoors, primarily hunting in the nearby fields and woodlots and fishing at Swan Lake and Black Hawk Lake. All four of the sons and one daughter, Karen, reside in Iowa and the other daughter, Shirley, is nearby in Omaha. Three of the sons, Ed, Rob, and Marty, let their appreciation of the outdoors grow to include birding, as did the fourth son, Tony, in Cedar Falls, although he is currently sidetracked by demands of family and career.

Ed, at 53, is the oldest, born in 1953 in their rural home at Breda, Carroll County He received his B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University in 1976 and had Dr. Jim Dinsmore as his lab instructor during Jim's first year there. He has just completed his 30th year with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as a Fisheries Research Technician. He and his wife Linda have two children and live in Spirit Lake. Ed has been involved with birds and birding since his early youth. He remembers looking up his first bird in a now-forgotten bird book and deciding it was a Song Sparrow, and he recounts the Loggerhead Shrike that once nested in a plum tree in the back yard of their farm house. He also recalls how a family friend observed that when one of the Thelen boys saw a bird, it wasn't just "a bird," it was a Mourning Dove or a Sparrow Hawk. Ed continued his interest in birds, and became a member of the IOU in 1986. Since that time, he has submitted numerous field reports of his observations in northwest Iowa and has also written for ***Iowa Bird Life***. In 2003, he authored "Success! First Wild Osprey Chick Hatched in Iowa" (Thelen 2003), which occurred at Spirit Lake. He also has submitted field notes on his observations of Mountain Bluebird, Western Tanager, White-faced Ibis, and Pacific

Loon. In addition, his photographs have appeared in the *Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas*, *Birds of South Dakota*, and *Iowa Bird Life*. Ed continues to share his knowledge with others by leading bird hikes in Dickinson County, a warbler walk at Kettleson-Hogsback area, and bird counts at the Brooks Golf Course as part of its sanctioning by the National Audubon Society. Dickinson County is Ed's favorite birding haunt, and it rewards him with some great birding. Last fall on Spirit Lake he had a one day total of Iowa's five grebes, a Black Scoter, and 16 Common Loons. He is also known to Iowa listers as the person who keeps track of the one or two Black-headed Gulls that have appeared on the north end Spirit Lake each year since first discovered there by Steve Dinsmore in 1994. Other good birds for the county include Brown Pelican, Cinnamon Teal, Piping Plover, White-winged Dove, Bohemian Waxwing, and Lazuli Bunting.

Marty is the second of the three, born in 1956 in Breda. After two years at Iowa State University, he returned to Carroll where his wife Sue and five children now live. He owned a bar and grill, The Duck Inn, for 10 years before joining The Graphic Edge as a production supervisor where he continues to work. Marty gives a lot of credit for his interest in birding to Ed and "his biological mind," and has become an active and involved birder himself. Like Ed, he is a regular contributor to *Iowa Bird Life* field reports, has participated in the Carroll County Christmas Bird Count for the past 10 years, and has been an IOU member since the early 1990s, although "there may have been a year or two I missed." When asked about his favorite birding spots, they are nearby—Swan Lake in Carroll County and Black Hawk Lake in Sac County. It was also in Sac County that he saw his most exciting bird, a Long-tailed Jaeger found by Pete Ernzen at Tomahawk Marsh in 1994. After seeing it, he and his brother Rob along with Ross Silcock and some of the assembled crowd went over to check out a dredge pond at Black Hawk Lake. Quizzing Ross about gull identifications, Marty pointed at another one. "What's that one?" When Ross announced that it was a Sabine's Gull, Marty shared with his brother a quizzical "what's that?" look. Ross said that they needed to get back to the Birdline. Marty's affinity for Iowa birding is evident in his life lists: 273 in Iowa and 287 total. Like his brothers, he birds out of the state only rarely, preferring to concentrate on western Iowa.

Rob, the third of the birding brothers, was born in 1963 in Carroll after his parents moved there from Breda. He still lives in Carroll, is employed by the maintenance division of the Iowa Department of Transportation and, with his wife Alicia operate "Our House to Yours," the largest consignment store in western Iowa. He and Alicia have two daughters and a son. Being the youngest of the three birders gave him two teachers to foster his skill, and it paid off. According to Marty, they used to have family competitions to see who could see the most birds during the year; the winner was awarded the "traveling trophy" from dad. The winning totals moved up from 250, sometimes approaching 300, and it was Rob who usually won. His brothers finally conceded defeat. Rob's strategy involved spending lots of time at Dunbar Slough. He thanks Ed for his advice on finding a Mountain Bluebird—he was watching for a "blue canary" among flocks of Eastern Bluebirds when he spotted one in Greene County near Squirrel Hollow. Rob broadened his interest in birds by raising Northern Bobwhites in his room. He ordered 100 eggs, incubated them, and released the birds in his yard and at the homes of friends where their calls became a favorite sound of summer. He doesn't believe that any birds survived over time but observes that

there are still wild birds in the area. Rob has been a member of IOU for a number of years and hosted the Swan Lake IOU meeting in 2001.

The birding sons credit their parents with their interest in birds, citing among other things, the game "Birdy in the Cage," which they played with the family on long road trips—its object was to have one other contestants think of a species; the others then taking turns trying to have the bird "let go" by guessing its name. For Marty, part of learning more about Iowa birds was ***The Des Moines Register*** fold-outs of our common birds. Rob recalls learning the real names of birds—not just "owl," but Screech-Owl.

A favorite story involves their days as youthful bird-banders. Catching birds with a live trap constructed of a mouse trap, rigid flap, and coffee can, they attached a tiny band made with a label maker to the subject's leg. Their name and four digit phone number enabled finders to contact them. Two returns among the 72 they banded were Black-capped Chickadees shot by neighbor kids with their BB gun; another chickadee was captured four times. The other returns included a Northern Junco eaten by a cat and a House Sparrow found dead. They also recalled a neighbor boy who decided to try banding also. The House Sparrow could barely get off the ground with the ponderous band he had attached. They also displayed the notebook they started in 1970, compiling dates and observations of the birds they encountered. Among the accounts was one of a Long-eared Owl that had nested in a pine tree in their yard. Collecting some of its pellets, they identified the remains of three shrews, 16 mice, and one bird.

Among the sons' children there are not yet any active birders, although most are able to identify common birds. They find themselves mostly occupied with school and friends and sports. Ed points out, however, that it was his nine-year-old son Nathan who initially spotted the first successful Osprey nest on an artificial nesting platform constructed for a pair that had tried unsuccessfully to nest during two previous years. While it may take some time to produce a new generation of birding Thelens, the brothers themselves will continue to submit field reports, participate in Christmas Bird Counts, and to be the eyes of the IOU in sparsely birded northwestern Iowa. And after their holiday meal, they may all get together for an old game of bird trivia. Lesser birders trying to compete might want to brush up.

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Walter M. Rosene Papers

Hank Zaletel

Figure 1. Walter M. Rosene speaking to a class at the American School of Wildlife Protection, McGregor, IA, no date. Permission for use granted by the Special Collections Department, Iowa State University, Ames.

The Walter M. Rosene papers in the Special Collections Department at the Iowa State University Library in Ames provide a fascinating account of an historical figure in Iowa bird life. The headline in the ***Community Magazine*** stated "Ogden Bank President Famous Birdman; W.M. Rosen (sic) selected as best equipped man in Iowa to teach bird life at Iowa City and McGregor" (Anon. 1927).

Walter Rosene was born 17 December 1880 in Ogden, Iowa. Graduating from Ogden High School in 1896, he worked with his father in a harness business until 1901. He accepted a similar job in Chicago in 1901, but he returned to Ogden several years later.

He started as a bookkeeper at the Ogden bank and then, through hard work, eventually became bank president, retiring in 1935. He then sold insurance until his death on 14 September 1941.

Walter Bennett, writing in Rosene's obituary, stated that "his ambition and perseverance achieved for him a place among Iowa's best ornithologists of all time. His was not that of the office chair and laboratory but that of hard labor in the field. His ornithology was not taxonomy, not distribution, not compilation, but bird behavior, and his accomplishments in that placed him among the best in the Middle West" (Bennett 1941).

He helped organize the Iowa Ornithologists' Union in 1923. In addition to being a charter member, he served as the Union's first president for two terms. He also served as secretary-treasurer from 1940 till his death in 1941.

Mr. Rosene was appointed to the Iowa Fish and Game Commission in 1934 and served fifteen months filling the unexpired term of J. N. (Ding) Darling. He served as treasurer of the Wilson Ornithological Club from 1930 to 1935.

He was an excellent speaker and teacher. His services were utilized at the University of Iowa and the American School of Wildlife Protection at McGregor, Iowa (Figure 1).

Bennett noted that he was an "excellent speaker with good voice and a degree of personal magnetism." He gave over 100 public lectures utilizing his hobby of photography to speak on the environment, conservation, and bird study (Figure 2).

Of particular interest to the Iowa bird student are the papers of Walter M. Rosene located at the Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.

The department is located on the fourth floor of the library. The collection is open during regular business hours or by special appointment (Rosene 1880–1941).

The collection consists of black and white/color lantern slides, black and white photographs and negatives, and bird watching records. Many of the photos are from Ledges State Park, a favorite birding spot.

Mr. Rosene was very thorough in documenting his field work and bird study. There are over 100 IOU field checklists dating from 1931–1940. Each checklist contains the date, conditions, location(s), times, and people present. The majority are from Boone County.

There is a diary of a three-week birding trip that he took in 1923 to the Dakotas and northern Iowa.

Figure 2. Group includes Walter M. Rosene (back left), first IOU president, and Arthur J. Palas (back right), second IOU president, no date. Permission for use granted by the Special Collections Department, Iowa State University, Ames.

He has a listing of first bird sightings of the year for Boone County from 1918–1939; a life list dating from 1901–1940; nesting owl records for Boone County; nesting records of Purple Martin colonies in Ogden, Iowa; Christmas Bird Count listings for species seen during the Boone County counts from 1922–1936; a list of the twenty-two articles he wrote and were published on bird study; and, finally, a list of the lectures that he gave including the topic, place, and date.

Truly, this man was visionary. His bird records of Boone County serve as a microcosm of field ornithology for the state of Iowa and the nation for the early twentieth century.

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Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch and Banding Project, 2007

Mark Orsag

SEASON IN SUMMARY—THE YEAR OF THE VULTURE

This was not a good season according to the numbers. The flight of 9,273 raptors and vultures of nineteen species, though average in diversity, was the worst ever for total raptors and vultures counted in the five years of full coverage at the Hitchcock Nature Center (HNC) hawk watch. This decline occurred despite a record 774 hours of coverage and a runaway record flight of Turkey Vultures (over 4,000). We only counted 12 raptors/vultures per hour in 2007, another record low for the hawk watch. The counts for Swainson's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, and Bald Eagles were particularly disappointing. In all, ten species of raptors posted record low counts for the full coverage era at the HNC, while six more turned in below average counts. Three new season records were set, however, (with one other species posting an above average count for 2007) along with three new day records (the day records were all set on 7 Oct).Once again this season, the weather patterns didn't help us. The lack of fronts in September followed by stalled fronts, clouds, rain, and fog in October definitely depressed totals at some key times during expected peak months of the HNC season.

Despite the slow flight and often miserable weather, our volunteers and our excellent paid counter Libbey Taylor staffed the watch every day between 1 Sep and 20 Dec. Libbey took over the counter's job, after our first hire failed to work out, under very difficult circumstances in mid-Sep. She learned fast and did a stellar job. On her last day on 14 Dec, a number of HNC volunteers turned out to see her off on what

Figure 1. Jori How, Libbey Taylor (in front), Mark Orsag, Elliot Bedows, and Jerry Toll at Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch Tower, 14 December 2007. Photograph by Fritz Davis, Omaha, NE.

was one of the coldest parties in history (Figure 1). A subadult Golden Eagle joined in too (circling the tower for five minutes)—a fitting sendoff. We also, despite a general lack of adequate resources, began a banding program for a few weeks this year, largely thanks to the boundless energy, expertise, and enthusiasm of Jerry Toll (see results at end).

SEASON IN DETAIL

August

Eight days of counting in the last two weeks of August produced a solid start to the 2007 season with 143 raptors and vultures of 10 species recorded. An immature Mississippi Kite found by Sandy Reinken on 26 August was the bird of the month. By the end of the month, immature Turkey Vultures were beginning to push south in respectable numbers. Winds were mostly southerly with temperatures in the 80s and 90s. A weak cold front on 29 August brought the best day of the month: a mixed flight of mostly vultures (20), buteos (25), and kestrels (9) that totaled a surprising 56 birds for counters Jason McMeen and Jerry Toll. Two days later on 31 August, 23 Turkey Vultures tacking into moderate southerly winds were joined by two Cooper's and two Red-tailed Hawks.

September

Due to the dearth of Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks recorded in September 2007, the month was (by a small margin) the worst September in HNC full coverage history. The month was dominated by south winds and Turkey Vultures; cold fronts were few. As is often the case, the first week of September was quite slow in overall numbers with immature vultures predominating. The flight picked up on 11 Sep with a flight of 107 birds of nine species for counters Jerry Toll, Jason McMeen, and Chad Graeve. This sunny day with light NNW winds seemed conducive for Turkey Vultures (39), Sharp-shinned Hawks (25), and Red-tailed Hawks (21).Very steady good numbers began on 19 Sep and continued through the end of the month with only one day (26 Sep) producing a count of less than 100 vultures and raptors.

The three best days in this long, consistently good stretch were 21, 23, and 30 Sep. On the 21st, a mild, partly cloudy day with light WNW winds, Fritz Davis, Jerry Toll, and Sandy Reinken observed a flight of 235 vultures and raptors of eleven species. Turkey Vultures (58) and Broad-winged Hawks (73) dominated the flight, which was also highlighted by two Merlins, four Peregrine Falcons, and an adult Mississippi Kite. Two days later, on a hot sunny day with strong SSW winds, the birds were much lower and closer for counters Sandy Reinken and Mark Orsag. Turkey Vultures (162) dominated this flight with accipiters (30 total), buteos (56 total), and Ospreys (6). The last day of Sep produced the month's largest flight as strong southerly winds and partly cloudy skies ahead of a promised (but never arriving) cold front produced yet another low-altitude, vulture-dominated flight for Sandy and Mark. Turkey Vultures (278) comprised approximately 70% of the 398 bird/11 species flight. Swainson's Hawks were the next most common species with a count of 43—a very disappointing number as a big flight had been expected. It was a strong day for falcons: seven American Kestrels, four Merlins, and eight Peregrine Falcons. The stalled front that day, however, probably caused the main mass of Swainson's Hawks to bypass HNC, which decreased the season totals.

October

October started off with what we had missed the day before—Swainson's Hawks. The first day of October was a mild sunny day with a slight westerly breeze. Swainson's Hawks (223) passing the tower that day were joined by 56 Turkey Vultures and a few other raptors for counters Libbey Taylor and Jason McMeen, for a total of seven species of 317 raptors and vultures. For the next five days, a repetitive pattern of vulture-dominated flights totaling between 200 and 252 birds occurred. On 7 Oct, a powerful cold front in the afternoon caused strong SSE winds to turn into strong NW winds, and the best flight of 2007 at HNC occurred. Mark Orsag and his Welsh Terrier Griffin were alone on the tower for much of the day, though Jerry Toll (who was in the banding station to the north of the tower) helped Mark count the vultures and raptors that poured through (particularly after the frontal boundary had gone past). By the time the sun set and the last swirling kettle was counted, 824 vultures and raptors of 13 species had been recorded. New HNC day records had been established for Turkey Vultures (512), Red-shouldered Hawks (3), and Merlins (8). Many Sharp-shinned (97), Cooper's (36), and Red-tailed Hawks (123) had also apparently liked riding the frontal boundary south past the HNC that day.

The second best flight of the fall occurred on 8 Oct, a sunny day with light WNW winds. A flight of 457 vultures and raptors of eleven species observed by counters Libbey Taylor, Jori How, Jason McMeen, and Jim Meyer was dominated by Turkey Vultures, with decent showings by Sharp-shinned (45) and Swainson's Hawks (44). Merlins (4) and Peregrine Falcons (2) were also seen, as were an impressive 5,150 Franklin's Gulls and 6,108 Double-crested Cormorants. Shortly after that, however, two fronts stalled over the Council Bluffs area and rain, fog, and clouds took a heavy toll on the raptor flight during this annually crucial middle section of October. The counts of Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and particularly Red-tailed Hawks were greatly decreased and the whole HNC raptor flight never truly revived. October's last real hurrah occurred on 21 Oct when a strong cold front with howling WNW winds finally broke the pattern. A flight of 373 raptors and vultures of eight species was dominated by Red-tailed Hawks (296), a good late showing by Turkey Vultures (34), and a Merlin and an adult Red-shouldered Hawk being the best birds of the day for counters Mark Orsag and Sandy Reinken. While not the worst ever October during the HNC full-coverage era, October 2007 was well below average overall despite the explosion of Turkey Vultures during the first week of the month.

November

November 2007 was the worst November in the HNC history. The very poor totals for Bald Eagles, and also for Northern Harriers and Sharp-shinned Hawks, helped keep totals for the entire month below 1,000 raptors. While November had its share of precipitation, fog, and clouds, the weather didn't seem to have been as much of a negative factor as it had been in October. There were a number of promising days, but the birds simply didn't seem to be there. Daily totals never exceeded 70 birds for the entire month with the exception of 28 Nov. A perfect cold, partly sunny, late-season day with gusty NW winds, the 28th produced a 132 raptor/five species flight for Libbey Taylor, Don Paseka, and Jerry Toll. Bald Eagles (73) and Red-tailed Hawks (50 [with several morphs/forms seen]) predominated. They were joined by three Sharp-shinned Hawks,

two Rough-legged Hawks, and two Golden Eagles. A rare, strong Snow Goose flight of 3,500 was also seen that day.

December

December 2007 was well below average in total numbers of raptors (315) and very disappointing in the very low Bald Eagle count (133) that actually lagged behind the Red-tailed Hawk count for the month (145), something that hadn't happened at HNC during the full-coverage era before. November did feature some excellent birds though—a Ferruginous Hawk, a Prairie Falcon, and two Golden Eagles along with 15 Rough-legged Hawks. December began with a snow-out day on 1 Dec. With winds gusting from the NW at 13–31 mph and temperatures in the 20s on 2 Dec, warmly dressed hawk watchers Jerry Toll, Mark Orsag, Bill Johnson, and Sandy Reinken counted a steady flight of Bald Eagles (51) and Red-tailed Hawks (48) that were joined by a lone Northern Harrier and a single American Kestrel for a total of 101 raptors of four species. After the 2nd, however, daily counts never reached 40 birds. Stan How, Clem Klaphake, and Jerry Toll closed out the season with a single Northern Harrier (an odd last bird for a very disappointing fall season) on 20 Dec.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black Vulture (0). This species, which was seen at HNC in September of 2002 and August of 2005, again failed to make an appearance in 2007.

Turkey Vulture (4,004). A truly massive new season record was 31% above the five-year average at HNC. The nearly constant southerly winds in September and early October were clearly a big factor, and Turkey Vultures tacking south through the Loess Hills were a constant presence in the early season. Sometimes they kettled, but more often they moved steadily and singly in almost assembly-line type fashion (one visible behind the other). October was, once again, the best month as the Turkey Vulture flight continues to shift later into the season each year. A record 512 Turkey Vultures were counted on 7 Oct. Two late individuals were seen headed south two days apart in November, with the last being recorded on 15 Nov.

Osprey (94). The Osprey count rebounded from a truly dismal 2006 total of 73, but this was still well below 2004 and 2005 when an average of 174 Ospreys per year were recorded. The count was also 19% below the five-year HNC average of 116. One must also note that the conditions were quite favorable for Ospreys this past year at the HNC, as they (like Turkey Vultures) often use the Loess Hills updrafts to tack their way south on days with moderate-to-strong southerly winds. September was, as always, the top month for Ospreys at HNC. The first two birds were recorded on 28 August, the last was seen on 13 Nov. The peak flight of 12 occurred with quite normal timing on 20 Sep.

Bald Eagle (443). Of all the "worst ever" counts this year, the 46% below-average total for the Bald Eagle was the most perplexing. There were plenty of good fronts in November and December, but there wasn't an abnormally early freeze of lakes and rivers. Conditions should have been ideal, and, by all accounts, Bald Eagle populations are increasing continent-wide. The problem for the HNC may be the increasingly westward-shifting path of the Snow Goose migration. Migrant Bald Eagles traditionally follow this food source, and

now relatively few snow geese are using areas such as DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge northwest of the HNC as fall stopovers. Despite the record low count, flight timing was normal in every way. The first Bald Eagle appeared on 3 Sep, and the high count of 73 occurred on 28 Nov. November was once again the best month for this species.

Northern Harrier (210). This species had another worst-ever species count for the full coverage era at HNC and was 27% below average. The first harrier was recorded on 24 August with the last southbound bird recorded on 20 Dec. The peak flight of 17 occurred on the 2007 season's best day, 7 Oct. October was, as usual, the best month despite some very bad weather during the traditional peak of the harrier flight in mid-Oct. At least one wintering bird remained in the area at the end of the season.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (766). This species was another worst-ever for the full coverage era, with the 2007 count being 24% below average. We wouldn't have guessed this result after a surprisingly fast start to the sharp-shinned flight in early September; 46 were counted on 9 Sep and another 25 two days later on 11 Sep. Other than a slightly late peak flight of 97 on 7 Oct and an echo flight of 45 the following day, however, the 2007 season proved to be a very disappointing one indeed for these small accipiters at the HNC. As with the Red-tailed Hawk and the Northern Harrier counts, poor weather in mid-Oct probably had a detrimental effect on the 2007 count for this species. The first sharp-shinned was counted on 28 August, and the last on 14 Dec (though some wintering birds remained in the area). Despite the fast start in September, October was the best month for sharp-shinneds at the HNC in 2007. There was some speculation among HNC's counters that low-flying sharp-shinneds tacking into the prevailing southerly winds were not easily visible from the tower and were being missed behind the East Ridge and the East Spurs, but the above average 2007 totals for the similarly behaving Cooper's Hawks seem to belie this hypothesis. We have also learned to watch the "backdoor" area near the old Badger Hill observation point to spot these often low-flying accipiters on south-wind days; many birds not seen while approaching the tower were indeed counted after passing it. We didn't consistently age birds, but the sharp-shinned flight seemed to have relatively few immatures this year.

Cooper's Hawk (259). The Cooper's Hawk was one of only four species to post above average totals at HNC in 2007. The autumn flight was 16% above average, and it was the second best total for this species in the HNC hawk watch history (behind only the 273 Cooper's Hawks recorded in 2004). This species also breeds and winters at the the HNC. The peak flight of 36 Cooper's Hawks occurred on 7 Oct. This was the first time ever at HNC that October was the peak Cooper's Hawk flight month—another indicator of a broad spectrum trend toward somewhat later migration among a number of early season migrants at the HNC.

Northern Goshawk (2). A full coverage worst at HNC, the Northern Goshawk count was 64% below average. An immature bird was seen on 11 Oct and an adult was sighted on 15 Nov. This is quite a rare species at HNC, however, so it is difficult to draw many conclusions about its migration or population status.

Red-shouldered Hawk (4). Despite an HNC day record three Red-shouldered Hawks on 7 Oct, this season's count was yet another HNC full coverage worst (31% below average). The remaining bird was recorded on 21 Oct. The migratory timing of this rare (at HNC) species has been quite unpredictable over the years, and this year continued that

trend. The birds recorded on the 7th were two immatures and one bird of indeterminate age. The bird recorded on 21 Oct was an adult.

Broad-winged Hawk (511). Though it was the second highest count of the full coverage era at the HNC for Broad-winged Hawks, the 2007 flight total was actually 19% below average due to the distorting effects of the massive 2005 flight (1,682 birds), which was very unusual for HNC. In 2007, for the first time ever at HNC, the total of Broad-winged Hawks exceeded the total of Swainson's Hawks. The first two Broad-winged Hawks were recorded on 19 August. The last two broad-wingeds were recorded on 8 Oct. The peak flight of 137 birds occurred on 22 Sep. September was the best month. Two dark-morph broad-wingeds were seen in 2007 at HNC.

Figure 2. Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, Pottawattamie,*19 October 2007. Photograph by Jerry Toll, Omaha, NE.*

Swainson's Hawk (419). The 2007 flight of Swainson's Hawks was 75% below the HNC average. This was less than half of the total recorded in the (previously) worst full coverage season (2003). It was less than one-eighth the number of Swainson's Hawks recorded at HNC during the record-setting 2005 season. It was less than the total recorded in many of the partial coverage seasons before 2003. In a very poor 2007 season, these numbers, along with those of Red-tailed Hawks, were greatly decreased from previous seasons. The main movement of Swainson's Hawks over the eastern Great Plains seems to have taken place west of HNC in 2007. A cold front predicted to come through on 30 Sep stalled in the Missouri River Valley area while winds immediately to the west shifted around to the north (and anecdotal evidence suggests that the birds did follow the frontal boundary through eastern Nebraska). The peak flight of 223 Swainson's Hawks at HNC occurred the next day on 1 Oct. The first Swainson's Hawk was recorded on 29 August, and the last 44 were recorded on 8 Oct. No dark morph Swainson's Hawks and just one rufous morph Swainson's Hawk were recorded in 2007.

Red-tailed Hawk (2,269). If there was one species that we could always count on for big numbers at HNC, it was the Red-tailed Hawk—that is, until 2007. The fall 2007 total for Red-tailed Hawks was 32% below average. While the red-tailed migration had a slow start in September, stalled fronts with rain, fog, and low-lying clouds plagued HNC during a ten-day period (10–20 Oct). During this normal peak red-tailed migration in most seasons at HNC, the watch recorded only 266 Red-tailed Hawks. The average for the two preceding seasons for the same period had been 1,505 red-taileds. When strong north

winds finally broke through and the rain held off on 21 Oct, the 2007 peak flight of 296 red-taileds was recorded. Six Krider's, 25 Harlan's, two Harlan's light morphs, 28 western dark morphs, two western rufous morphs, and 20 dark-morph indeterminate red-taileds were recorded this season.

Rough-legged Hawk (22). The 2007 Rough-legged Hawk total at HNC was slightly higher than the record low posted in 2006, but it was still 30% below the five-year full coverage average at the HNC. The first rough-legged was seen on 15 Nov, and the peak flight of five occurred on 16 Dec. December was the peak month. Six dark-morph rough-leggeds were recorded; this amounted to 27% of the 2007 flight at HNC. This is a higher percentage than HNC normally records, and it may suggest that birds from the eastern North American Arctic (where dark-morph rough-leggeds are a much higher percentage of the population than in more western regions) constituted a higher proportion of 2007's flight.

Ferruginous Hawk (1). A lone juvenile dark morph was recorded on 9 Dec. This count is 38% below the four-year average, but given the rarity of this species at HNC, this result is not statistically significant.

Golden Eagle (13). This was another poor year for this species at the HNC (33% below average); after an even worse one in 2006. The first Golden Eagle was spotted on 12 Oct. November was, as usual, the top month, and peak flights of two occurred on three dates—22 Oct, 28 Nov, and 14 Dec. This multiple peak-flight phenomenon, for unknown reasons, has repeatedly been a distinguishing feature of the Golden Eagle flight over the years at HNC. The last two Golden Eagles recorded in 2007 at HNC were those seen on 14 Dec, and none appeared to be wintering in the area this year (as had been the case in some recent years).

American Kestrel (122). The American Kestrel count bested the very poor 2006 total (107), but was still the second worst count in the full coverage period at HNC for this species. Thus, there is no real evidence of a reversal of the pattern of decline that this species has exhibited at HNC. Many of the best seasons for this species at HNC actually occurred when the watch was far less systematically covered than is currently the case. For example, in only 426 hours of coverage in 2002 (as opposed to 774 hours in 2007), the HNC hawk watch recorded 224 American Kestrels. The only other species that show a remotely similar pattern are two rare and irruptive (from opposite directions geographically) migrants—the Northern Goshawk and the Mississippi Kite—and those species posted higher totals in only one pre-full-coverage year (2000). The 2007 count for American Kestrels was 6% below the full coverage average. The first migrant kestrel was recorded on 24 August, and the last on 18 Dec (though a few wintering birds remained in the area past that date). The shallow peak flight of 11 occurred just a bit early on 7 Sep.

Merlin (36). One of the few bright spots this year, the 2007 Merlin count constituted a new season record and was 23% above average. The first Merlin appeared on 13 Sep, and the last was recorded on 19 Nov. Merlin migration was slightly later (a bit more centered in October) than usual. The peak flight of eight on 7 Oct was a new day record. The south winds in early October probably helped the count a bit as did the little falcons' interest in the banding station and its lures (though no Merlins were trapped). This probably slowed them down a bit and made these "pocket rockets" a bit easier to spot. As usual, both *columbarius* and *richardsoni* individuals were recorded.

Peregrine Falcon (46). This count was another new season record for the HNC at 25% above average. This strong count (as with the Merlins) was probably due to the nearly constant south winds in September and early October, which probably encouraged more peregrines to seek a bit of extra lift from the updrafts of the Loess Hills as they powered and tacked their way south. The first peregrine was spotted on 7 Sep, and the last was seen quite late on 23 Nov. September was the peak month, and the daily high counts of eight were recorded on 20 and 30 Sep. As usual, both ***tundrius*** and ***anatum*** birds were recorded.

Prairie Falcon (2). This western species posted a very poor total (57% below average) with one immature bird seen harassing a Northern Harrier on 28 Oct and an adult bird powering past the watch on 13 Dec. This was the lowest total for this species in the full coverage period at HNC.

Mississippi Kite (2). After being missed entirely in 2006, this rare southern species once again graced the HNC hawk watch in 2007 with an immature appearing on 26 August and an adult on 21 Sep. Still, the 2007 count was 73% below the five-year average.

NONRAPTOR FLIGHT

Waterfowl, Shorebirds, Wading Birds, and Gulls

The nonraptor totals were inconclusive this year due to the mid-season change in counters and a series of new protocols regarding nonraptors. We finally think that we have this perfected, which will allow us to produce more informative data in the future. For 2007, a list of notable numbers or individual sightings must suffice. Double-crested cormorants produced two big flights this year: 3,000 birds on 30 Sep and 6,108 on 21 Oct. A late Great Blue Heron was notable on 15 Dec, a laggard Great Egret headed south on 6 Nov, and Sandhill Cranes made two appearances at HNC this year with four seen on 21 Oct and nine seen on 16 Nov. A lone Bonaparte's Gull appeared on 28 Oct, a Common Snipe winged by on 3 Nov, and Franklin's Gulls produced a rather shallow peak flight of 5,150 on 8 Oct. Snow Goose numbers are, in the words of Jerry Toll, "absolutely pitiful" now at HNC—a shadow of the sky-filling flights that we used to see. Their flight peaked with a meager 8,470 on 30 Nov; three Ross's Geese accompanied their larger cousins that day. American White Pelican numbers were so feeble that no notable flights of them were recorded in 2007 at HNC.

Passerines and Corvids

Blue Jays were seen in big numbers this year with a huge peak flight of 4,000 on 25 Sep. American Crows, on the other hand, posted extremely poor numbers, peaking with a meager flight of 1,030 on 23 Oct. On 7 Oct, 24 Common Nighthawks were spotted. November produced the nonraptor sighting of the 2007 HNC season when Eliot Bedows, Jori How, Jason McMeen, and Libbey Taylor saw the first Common Raven ever recorded at the HNC on 9 Nov. Two days later on 11 Nov, a flock of nine Red Crossbills passed within 15 feet of the tower and an Orange-shafted Northern Flicker was seen 40 minutes later.

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Aaron Brees, Mark Churchill, Fritz Davis, Bob Fuchs, Griffin [official HNC hawk watch volunteer mascot], Jori and Stan How, Bill Johnson, Clem Klaphake, Don and Shirley Maas, Sue Mattix, Jason McMeen, Jim Meyer, Wayne Nicholas, Mark Orsag, Babs and Loren Padelford, Don and Janis Paseka, Sandy Reinken, Jim Sinclair, Libbey Taylor, Jerry Toll, and to everyone else who visited HNC and participated in the 2007 hawk watch.

Raptor Banding at Hitchcock Hawk Watch, 2007

Jerry Toll

DIURNAL BANDING

In conjunction with HNC, a raptor banding station was opened this season to expand our knowledge of the HNC migration. By collecting morphological data on individuals, the HNC will have a better understanding of age and sex ratios and the overall health of the migrants. This new program will provide a platform for future raptor research and educational opportunities.

Results

Diurnal banding began on 25 Sep and continued during the peak migration period, which is the entire month of October. The effort consisted of 30 banding days and 161 hours. Three species were banded for a total capture of 37 birds:

Five Sharp-shinned Hawks
- one male hatch-year
- four females, two hatch-year and two after-hatch-year

Nine Cooper's Hawks
- five males, three hatch-year and two after-hatch-year
- four females, one second-year, one after-second-year, and one after-hatch-year

Twenty-three Red-tailed Hawks. Sex cannot be determined in the fall.
- Age: Sixteen hatch-year, one second year, and six after-hatch-year.
- Forms: One Harlan's (Figure 2), one Krider's, four westerns, and nineteen easterns.

Discussion

The low capture rate was disappointing, but a number of the underlying reasons are correctable. The first season of a new raptor banding station is mostly a learning experience. Each site is unique and must be improved to become more efficient. Equipment is tested

Figure 3. Northern Saw-whet Owl, Pottawattamie*, 27 November 2007. Photograph by Jerry Toll, Omaha, NE.*

and refined during the initial season. The first season was shortened and was not initiated until peak season for buteos and accipiters, and the site was only opened for a month due to limited funding. The accipiter capture rate was particularly low due to a lack of foresight on my part. Other influences on capture rate are beyond the control of the bander. Weather greatly influences raptor movement. It influences not only whether raptors will be concentrated on the Loess Hills ridgeline, but also what track they take along the ridgeline. The HNC is set up to identify raptors up to four miles distant in any direction. The banding station is much more limited in its scope of influence. Raptors could be seen more than a mile distant from the station, but the highest response rate is by those closer and flying at low or medium heights. A detailed discussion of the influence of weather patterns on the fall migration can be found in the rest of the HNC report.

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL BANDING

While Northern Saw-whet Owls had never previously been found at HNC, discussions with banding instructors at both Hawk Ridge (MN) and in the Sandia Mountains (NM) suggested that Northern Saw-whet Owls are probably using the Loess Hills as a nocturnal migration route. This species, however, is not easily detected because of their nocturnal and secretive habits. Therefore, their population-range limits need to be further tested. When diurnal banding ceased, it was decided to see if they were occurring at the HNC as a prelude to expanding the program to include Saw-whets. Four evening sessions occurred between 11 and 27 Nov lasting 4 to 5 hours each for a total of 18 hours of effort. The phenology of saw-whets for latitude 40–45 degrees north is 1 Oct–1 Dec; therefore, the sessions were probably post-peak to late season attempts. The sessions were timed to maximize results by banding on dark moonless nights with moderate northerly tail winds. The skewed capture rate is somewhat offset by using heavier mist nets that allows smaller saw-whets to escape and with a less than recommended net array.

Results

Seven Northern Saw-whet Owls were captured (although one escaped on approach), resulting in six being banded (Figure 3):

- Sex: Five females and one could not be reliably sexed.
- Age: Four hatch-year, two after-hatch-year.

Discussion

All of the captures were in the lower half of the mist net. Four of the captures were in

the end nets furthest from the taped recording; three were in the middle nets, but one net away from the recording. The lack of the smaller males captured suggests that perhaps they were able to extricate themselves before net-checks. The high capture rate, particularly late in the season, suggests that saw-whets occur frequently in the Loess Hills and this merits continued research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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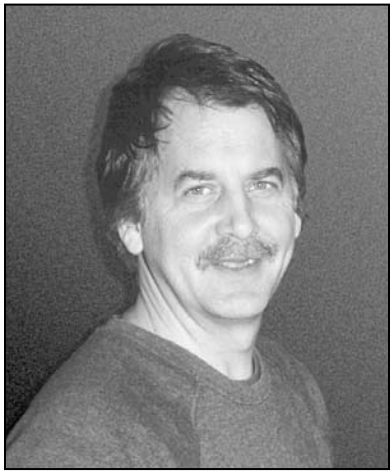
Field Reports—Fall 2007

Paul Hertzel



Paul Hertzel

WEATHER

Although August 2007 was warm, the 17th warmest since records began; the real story was the rain (Figure 1). With 9.78 inches of average statewide precipitation, a new August record total was set. In fact, August 2007 was the third wettest month ever recorded in Iowa, surpassed only by July 1993 and June 1947. Severe flooding occurred in many areas, particularly in the north. In the first half of September, the rains eased up, but returned in the latter half in the form of widespread severe weather including two tornadoes in Poweshiek County. Temperatures were below normal only from the 9th through the 16th, but did produce the season's first mild frost on the 15th. Persistent south winds dominated late in the month and there was a general absence of favorable fronts. In October, this unusually rainy fall continued with the 4th wettest October on record. Especially in the first half of the month, the state was hit with four significant rain events on the 2nd, 7th, 13th, and 18th. Then, the first strong cold front capable of moving large concentrations of migrants, arrived on the 21st, windy, but dry. The combination of abundant rain and no freezes until the 23rd, kept trees green much later than usual. People looking for fall colors in the first half of the month had to wait, and many parts of the state were still lush in early November, giving a feeling of 30 days earlier. But the abundant moisture ended in mid-October, and the state began to dry out. In fact, there was so little precipitation in November, the month actually ended as the third driest in 135 years of record-keeping. Nearly all precipitation could be attributed to a single snowfall across the southern half of the state on the 21st. At some locations, like Sac City and Sioux Center, there was no recorded precipitation during the month at all.

HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

The record rains began early and quickly obliterated most of the shorebird habitat across the state. Union Slough NWR in Kossuth County, usually a shorebird haven, was completely flooded the entire season. Twelve inches of rain fell at Rathbun Lake 24 Aug, and traditional areas along the Des Moines River and the associated reservoirs offered little shorebird habitat after about 5 Aug. Beyond that date, the largest concentration of Pectoral Sandpipers, one of Iowa's most abundant migrants, was 23, and none of the five reports of

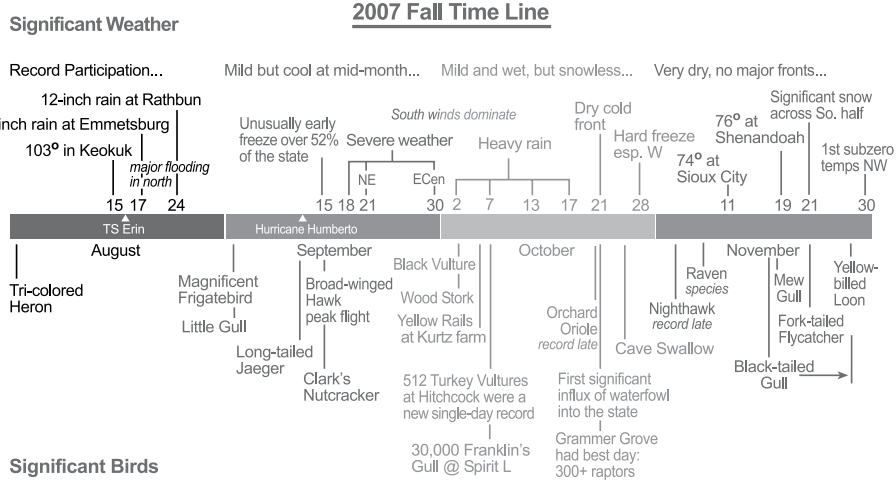


Figure 1. Fall 2007 weather and significant birds time line.

Semipalmated Sandpipers exceeded 10 birds. A couple of bright spots were Iowa's 6th fall record of Whimbrel and two records each of Red Phalarope and Red Knot.

It was a consistent theme—many mediocre or poor flights for expected species but excellent occurrences of rare regulars and vagrants. Both Common and Caspian Terns were difficult to find in late September's severe weather and the heavy rains of early October, but Aaron Brees found three ibis at Runnells and Iowa's second Wood Stork at Jester Park; Jay Gilliam found a Laughing Gull at Red Rock; and Sabine's Gulls made daily appearances at Saylorville. While viewing the Wood Stork, Pam Allen glanced skyward and pointed out a Black Vulture to her photographer-husband, who captured it on his memory card. The persistent rains and lack of favorable fronts probably disrupted some of the raptor movements, particularly Swainson's Hawks in the west. At the Hitchcock hawk watch, the Broad-winged Hawk totals surpassed the Swainson's Hawk totals for the first time. The rains also may have disrupted the staging of Purple Martins, which never gathered in their usual numbers. But another swallow made headlines when Steve Dinsmore picked out a first-state record Cave Swallow from several hundred Tree Swallows moving along the banks of Saylorville Reservoir. In the northeast, Dennis Carter noted, "Except for a brief flurry of warblers in late August, passerine migrants were scarce." There were only three sight records of Gray-cheeked Thrush, five of Palm Warbler, and two of Blackpoll Warbler.

Wet and warm weather persisted into mid-October and may have contributed to several late dates. Rough-winged Swallow, Canada Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler set 2nd- and 3rd-latest dates in October, and an Orchard Oriole was record late on 20 Oct. Both Red-eyed Vireo and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher were found on 3rd-latest dates in November, a *Plegadis* species was record late on 2 November, and a Common Nighthawk in Des Moines was record late the next day.

The rains ended on 17 Oct, and did not occur again. A windy, polar cold front blew in on 21 October, and although it was dry, it changed both the meteorological and the or-

nithological landscape. Grammer Grove had a 300+ day of counting raptors, and the first large influx of waterfowl occurred. Peak counts of common regulars were not what they have been in the past, but numbers of rare species and vagrants were noteworthy. Away from the Mississippi River, Lesser Scaup numbers were modest, but a group of Greater Scaup at Spirit Lake grew to 179 by 10 Nov, possibly the largest fall count on record. Both Surf Scoters and Black Scoters appeared early and in record numbers, although White-winged Scoters were harder to find and Long-tailed Ducks never were found. Common Loons passed through in modest numbers, noted by Aaron Brees as producing "no big triple-digit loon day," yet all three of the other loon species were found, including a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon at Saylorville just as the season was coming to an end. Steve Dinsmore noted gull numbers were strong, especially Bonaparte's, Franklin's, and Sabine's, and vagrants were well-represented, but this might not have been the case without Steve whose finds included a Little Gull, a Long-tailed Jaeger, and a sensational first-state record Black-tailed Gull. In all, 14 gull species and two jaegers made the most in eleven years. The last two weeks of the season saw a flurry of activity with the Black-tailed Gull at Saylorville followed almost immediately by another first-state record bird, a Fork-tailed Flycatcher in rural Tama County found by Mary Ann Gregory.

UNUSUAL SPECIES

Three species new to Iowa occurred this fall, a lone Cave Swallow (SJD) in Polk County, a Black-tailed Gull (SJD) also in Polk County, and a Fork-tailed Flycatcher (MAG) in Tama County. These species bring to 419 the total of the Iowa state list. Seven other accidentals were found: Yellow-billed Loon, Magnificent Frigatebird, Tricolored Heron, Wood Stork, Black Vulture, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Clark's Nutcracker. In addition, birders found six casual species: Whimbrel, Red Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Little Gull, Mew Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake. This may be remembered as the fall of the vagrant.

SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species. * = documented, ph = photo. 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.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Suddenly appeared in numbers in 3 counties on 21 Oct following the season's first major winter cold front: 224 at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD, DP), 348 in *Marion* (JG), and 265 in *Decatur* (NJM). Prior to that, there was 1 at Blackbird M *Pottawattamie* 3 Oct (WP), and 2 at Sandhill L *Woodbury* 6 Oct (POR). The last were 4 at Rapp P *Page* 26 Nov (KDy).

Snow Goose: Single birds or small groups could be found in early Aug after summering in *Decatur* (JRL, JLi), *Clay* (LAS), and *Woodbury* (SJD, TLu, POR). The first migrants were 650 at Hitchcock NC *Pottawattamie* 10 Oct (JT). There was no really massive flight during the fall season; the largest concentrations were 2,000 on 3 Nov *Story* (SSP), 2,000 at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* 27 Nov (BB), 5,000 at Rapp P *Page* 30 Nov (KDy), and 8,470 at Hitchcock 30 Nov (JT).

Ross's Goose: First few: 1 at Jim Ketelsen Greenwing M *Story* 10 Oct (SSP), 2 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 22 Oct (AB), and 1 in Grinnell *Poweshiek* 22 Oct (MP). Peak: Up to 36 at Rapp P *Page* early Nov (KDy).

Cackling Goose: Small groups appeared in early Oct with 7 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 2 Oct (SJD) and 4 at Silver L *Delaware* 3 Oct (BSc) before the first large flocks began to arrive on 21 Oct in the north (PH). Some notable concentrations were 450 in Mason City 9 Nov (PH), 386 at Swan L SP *Carroll* 11 Nov (SJD, JG), 500 in *Sioux* 29 Nov (JVD), and 800 at Rapp P *Page* 30 Nov (KDy).

Canada Goose: The tundra-nesting *interior* race began arriving in the north on 15 Sep (PH) without the accompaniment of Cackling Geese as in recent years.

Trumpeter Swan: There were only two reports of unmarked adults.

Tundra Swan: First arrivals in the NE were 220 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 4 Nov (BSc). On 21 Nov 1,895 were counted along the Mississippi R between Pool #9 and Pool #14 (USFWS aerial survey), with about 1,490 at Pool #9 alone (JG). Away from the river, the largest concentrations were 20 over Willowglen Nursery *Winneshiek* 20 Nov (DC) and 32 on 21 Nov *Polk* (Drake Larsen *fide* SJD).

Gadwall: Peaked on 23 Oct with 2,986 at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD) and 3,050 at Red Rock *Marion* (AB).

American Wigeon: Small clusters began to appear across the state with the 21 Oct cold front. The most was 970 at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* 8 Nov (BB).

American Black Duck: First few: 2 at Runnells WA *Marion* 21 Oct (JG, AB), then 1 at Grover's L *Dickinson* 27 Oct (LAS). A hybrid with Mallard was at Runnells 21 Oct–4 Nov (AB, SJD).

Blue-winged Teal: The most was 709 at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* 20 Sep (BB). One was still at Runnells WA *Marion* 4 Nov (SJD).

Northern Shoveler: The most was 300 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 21 Oct (RLC).

Northern Pintail: Gathered in large numbers at Runnells WA *Marion* starting with 1,600 23 Sep (JG) and building to 7,400 by 7 Oct (AB). Elsewhere: 1,050 at South Twin Lake *Calhoun* 2 Nov (SSP), including a hybrid with Mallard.

Green-winged Teal: Numbers at South Twin L *Calhoun* built to 4,500 on 12 Nov (SSP). Large concentrations elsewhere were about 1,000 at Runnells WA *Marion* 23 Oct–4 Nov (AB, SJD) and 843 at Saylorville 1 Nov (SJD).

Canvasback: In the vicinity of Pool #9 on the Mississippi R *Allamakee*, numbers rose from 3,200 on 9 Oct to 152,000 by the end of the month (USFWS). In the west, the largest concentration was 203 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 26 Oct (ET).

Redhead: Most: 106 at Saylorville 23 Oct (SJD) and 105 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 11 Nov (ET). The last report was 2 at Lizard L *Pocahontas* 12 Nov (SSP).

Ring-necked Duck: Peak: 7,000 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 29 Oct (USFWS). Away from the river: 593 at Saylorville 1 Nov (SJD).

Greater Scaup: First: 1 at Saylorville 23 Oct (SJD). At Spirit L *Dickinson*, 52 found 26 Oct (ET), grew to 179 (71 males, 108 females) by 10 Nov (ET, JG, SJD), the largest fall concentration I can find on record. Other locations: 29 at South Twin L *Calhoun* 12 Nov (SSP) and 1 at Cedar L *Linn* 26 Nov (DP).

Lesser Scaup: On 21 Nov, the USFWS aerial survey counted 47,060 scaup in the vicinity of Pool #9 *Allamakee*. Greatest concentrations away from the river: 2,760 at Saylorville 28 Oct (SJD), 1,500 at Rath-

bun L *Appanoose* 12 Nov (RLC), 920 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 12 Nov (AB).

Surf Scoter: Two at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 27 Sep (ET) were 2nd-earliest. There were at least 36 birds reported, which was four times the 25-year fall average, and a record total. Some notable groups from the 13 locations: 4 at Saylorville 15 Oct (AB), 6 at Little Wall L *Hamilton* 21 Oct (SSP), and 6 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 4 Nov (ET).

White-winged Scoter: Arrived at 3 distinct locations on 22 Oct: 2 at Coralville L *Johnson* (CRE, DP), 4 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 3 at Saylorville (AB) with 1 staying through 27 Oct (JG, SJD). The only others were 3 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 8–11 Nov (ET, LAS).

Black Scoter: At least 27 individuals made a record total more than five times the 25-year average. The first 2 at Lizard L *Pocahontas* 19 Oct (SSP) were 3rd-earliest. Reported from Saylorville 21 Oct–17 Nov (SJD-ph, m.ob) with at least 8 there on 17 Nov (SJD). All others: 1 at Maffitt Res *Polk* 22 Oct (JG, AB, RIA, PHA), 1–4 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 23 Oct–4 Nov (AB, SJD, JG), 1at L&D 14 *Scott* 31 Oct (SMF), 2 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 4–11 Nov (ET, LAS), 2 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 10 Nov (JG), and 1 at Lake Ahquabi SP *Warren* 7–11 Nov (AB, SG, JS, DP).

Long-tailed Duck: No fall reports, an event that has only happened once before in the last 25 years.

Bufflehead: First: 2 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 19 Oct (ET). Most: 1,250 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 29 Oct (USFWS). Scattered pockets of birds remained through the end of the season and 60 were still at Saylorville on 27 Nov (AB).

Common Goldeneye: Four at Lake Odessa *Louisa* 10 Oct (RAS) were 2nd-earliest. Another early single was at Saylorville 27 Oct (SJD). The most was 490 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 21 Nov (USFWS).

Hooded Merganser: The most in one place was 40 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 12 Nov (RLC).

Common Merganser: Except for one molting male at Red Rock Res *Marion* on the inexplicable date of 4 Aug (SJD, JG), the first migrant was a female at the same location exactly 3 months later on 4 Nov (JG). Numbers built quickly at the end of the month, peaking at 2,500 at Saylorville 30 Nov (SSP).

Red-breasted Merganser: There were three Oct reports: 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 10 Oct (SJD, WO) [3rd-earliest], 1 at Pleasant Creek RA *Linn* 11 Oct (DP), and 5 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 26 Oct (ET). The most was 39 at Saylorville 25 Nov (SJD).

Ruddy Duck: A huge influx of ruddies entered the state following a major Oct cold front. On 22 Oct, 1,000 were at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 22 Oct (PH) and 731 at Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET). On 23 Oct, 910 were at Red Rock *Marion* (AB) and 1,166 were at Saylorville (SJD, JG).

Gray Partridge: Although the only reports of Gray Partridge came from a cluster of three central Iowa counties, DNR August roadside surveys showed no statistically significant change in the species, which is distributed erratically across the northern half of the state. The most was 26 in rural *Boone* 20 Oct (SJD).

Ruffed Grouse: One at Stephens SF *Lucas* 26 Oct (KDy) and 1 heard along the Upper Iowa R *Allamakee* 4 Nov (BSc).

Greater Prairie Chicken: At least 10 were at the Kellerton Grasslands *Ringgold* 2 Oct (KDy).

Wild Turkey: The most was 185 at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* 18 Oct (BB).

Northern Bobwhite: 1 near Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug (SSP) and another at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 23 Sep (POR) were the only reports away from the south-

ern tier of counties. Most was 32 in *Decatur* 3 Sep (NJM).

Red-throated Loon: All: 1 juv at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 30 Oct–4 Nov (*RG, CJF, PH) and 1 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 10 Nov (JG).

Pacific Loon: At least three: An ad. at Saylorville 12 Oct (AB, JG, *SJD, DP, JB, TLu) was 2nd-earliest and probably accounted for all sightings through 3 Nov. A juv was at Saylorville 18 Nov (SSP). Another ad. was at Clear Lake *Cerro Gordo* 21 Nov (PH).

Common Loon: The first of only about 14 reports was 2 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 2 Sep (SJD, JG). The only location with more than 8 at a time was Saylorville, which peaked late on 13 Nov with 57 (SJD, AB).

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: A juv found 28 Nov at Saylorville by SJD stayed through 30 Nov (*SJD-ph, *AB-ph, *JG-ph).

Pied-billed Grebe: The most was 147 at Saylorville 22 Oct (AB).

Horned Grebe: First: 2 in *Union* 22 Sep (JRL). 118 birds reported on 13 bodies of water with a peak on 23 Oct when 23 were at Lake Manawa *Pottawattamie* (POR), and 56 were at Saylorville (SJD, JG).

Red-necked Grebe: Following breeding at Grover's L in *Dickinson*, 10 Red-necked Grebes were counted there on 11 Aug (LAS). Also found at Welch L *Dickinson* (RG, SSP, WO) and Diamond L *Dickinson* (JHW). The only report outside of *Dickinson* was 1 at South Twin L in *Calhoun* on 1 Oct (*SSP-ph).

Eared Grebe: Only 8 birds found all season: 2 at Saylorville 23 Aug (SJD, JG), 1 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 19 Sep (ET), 2 at Banner WA *Warren* 27 Sep (AB), 1 a Saylorville 20 Oct (JG, SJD), 1 at Lake Manawa *Pottawattamie* (KDy, TLu), and 1 at Lost Island L *Palo Alto* 24 Nov (LAS).

Western Grebe: Ten reports from *Clay*, *Dickinson*, *Calhoun*, *Polk*, *Appanoose*, *Marion* and *Hamilton*. Up to 3 were at Spirit L *Dickinson* 2 Sep–19 Oct (ET, JG, RG, SJD), but the most were 6 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 21 Oct (RLC).

American White Pelican: With 2,200 already at Saylorville at the beginning of Aug (AB), numbers quickly increased. At least 10,000 were downstream at Red Rock *Marion* on 4 Aug (SJD, JG) and numbers held in the thousands along the Des Moines R reservoir system through the end of Sep (JB, SJD, JS). There were 530 still at Runnells WA *Marion* 4 Nov (SJD), and 340 were counted at Red Rock as late as 25 Nov (AB).

Double-crested Cormorant: The largest movements were during the second week of October when 6,108 were counted at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 8 Oct (JT) and 2,177 were at Saylorville 13 Oct (BE, SJD).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: An adult female was found and photographed 2 Sep at Spirit L *Dickinson* by SJD and JG. This was approximately 2 weeks after Tropical Storm Erin turned NW from the Caribbean, and cut into the Texas gulf coast. The bird was seen by many on the 2nd, stayed the night in the area, then was sighted again, briefly, the next day. (*SJD-ph, *JG-ph, *ET-ph, *PH-ph, *MCK, *LAS).

American Bittern: The last was 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 31 Oct (WO).

Least Bittern: Five August reports ended with 1 at Grover's L *Dickinson* 27 Aug (LAS) and another at Tannery Ponds *Woodbury*, 29 Aug (POR).

Great Egret: Gathered in especially large numbers along the Des Moines R particularly near Red Rock Res *Marion*. The 214 counted 4 Aug (SJD, JG) later peaked at 362 on 7 Oct (AB, RIA, PHA).

Snowy Egret: All: 1 at Port Neal *Woodbury* 6 Oct (POR), 3 on 9 Oct at Sedan *Appanoose* (JWR), and 1 at Krumm WA *Jasper* 21 Oct (AMJ-details, BSc-details) [2nd-latest].

Little Blue Heron: No reports.

TRICOLORED HERON: An adult found by KDy at Rapp P *Page* 2–4 Aug (*KDy-ph, *JG-ph, *RIA-ph, *PHA, *SJD) was Iowa's fifth record, and first fall occurrence. Three of the five records have come from the extreme SW.

Cattle Egret: All: 5 at Sandhill L *Woodbury* 7 Sep (GLV), 66 at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* 26 Sep (POR), 8 at the north-end footbridge at Spirit L *Dickinson* 2 Oct (ET), 1 at Red Rock *Marion* 7 Oct (AB), 4 at Saylorville 9 Oct (SJD), and 1 juv at Runnells WA *Marion* 4 Nov (SJD, JG).

Green Heron: Last: 1 at Diamond L *Poweshiek* 8 Oct (MP).

Black-crowned Night Heron: All: Up to 3 at a time at Rapp P *Page* 31 Aug–4 Nov (KDy), 9 at Banner WA *Warren* 24 Sep (JS), 1 at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* 26 Sep (POR), 2 at Credit Is *Scott* 4 Oct (RAS, WMZ), 1 at Cedar L *Linn* 15 Oct (BSc), and 1 on the Saylorville dam 28 Oct (JRL, m.ob).

Yellow-crowned Night Heron: 2 juvs were at Chichaqua WA *Polk* 21 Aug–2 Sep (RES-ph, AB, JG, SSP, KVS), 3 juvs at Ledges SP *Boone* 23 Aug (JHW), and 1 juv at Saylorville 14 Sep (AB).

White-faced Ibis: 3 at Sandhill L *Woodbury* 29 Sep–4 Oct (GLV-details, POR) were identified by the red iris.

***Plegadis* species**: 3 at Runnells WA *Marion* 27 Sep (AB), and a record-late bird at Montrose M *Lee* 31 Oct–2 Nov (*JWR).

WOOD STORK: Iowa's 2nd record of Wood Stork was a juv found and photographed at Jester Park *Polk* 3 Oct by *AB. Seen by many, and documented by no less than eleven, it stayed through 7 Oct (Maridel Jackson).

BLACK VULTURE: A single bird was spotted in the air over Jester Park *Polk* 3 Oct by birders looking for the Wood Stork (*PHA, *RIA-ph, *SJD-ph, *JB, *JWR), and was found again the next day.

Turkey Vulture: A record season flight of 4,004 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* was one of the few bright spots for the hawk watch this year (JT). A single-day record total of 512 occurred there 7 Oct. Last: 1 over the city of Des Moines 19 Nov (AMJ) was getting late.

Osprey: Peaked at the end of the 3rd week of Oct. Most: 12 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 20 Sep (JT), where the last of the season also was seen 8 Nov (JT).

Mississippi Kite: All: 1 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 26 Aug (JT), 1 ad over the city of Des Moines 8 Sep (RIC), 1 in *Decatur* 14, 15 Sep (JLi, NJM), 1 at Hitchcock 21 Sep (JT), and the last at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 1 Oct (MP).

Bald Eagle: Widely reported after a summer of record nesting in the state (Dinmore 2007). High count of 28 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* occurred on the last day of the season 30 Nov (MP) punctuating a record total season.

Northern Harrier: 33 reports from 19 counties. Most: 35 counted at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 21 Oct (MP, DP).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: After the first appeared 31 Jul (Dinsmore 2007), the last day of the summer season, there were no Aug reports. Then, a trickle of birds began with 1 on 1 Sep in *Van Buren* (RLC), and another on 2 Sep in *Decatur* (JLi). After a mid-Sep peak, Hitchcock hawk watch recorded its lowest season total on record (MO). Peaked in the east on 21 Oct with 79 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP, DP).

Cooper's Hawk: In contrast to their sharp-shinned totals, Hitchcock hawk watch recorded their 2nd-highest season

for Cooper's Hawks, 259 individuals (JT). Peaked in the first week of Oct at both hawk watches (MP, JT).

Northern Goshawk: Of thirteen reports, the first was record early on 28 Aug in *Boone* (*MH). The next few were 1 in *Page* 20 Sep (KDy), and 1 at Sedan *Appanoose* 29 Sep (RLC). Of eight birds aged, seven were immatures

Red-shouldered Hawk: The season total of 13 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* was a season record (MP). Also reported from *Black Hawk*, *Decatur*, *Delaware*, *Jackson*, *Polk*, *Pottawattamie*, and *Warren*.

Broad-winged Hawk: Some peak counts: 360 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 15 Sep and 218 there on 26 Sep (MP), 147 at Saylorville 11 Sep (SJD), 116 at the Luther bridge *Boone* 22 Sep (JG). The last was 1 at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* 8 Oct (JT). Hawk watch season totals were 892 in the east (*Marshall*), and 511 in the west (*Pottawattamie*).

Swainson's Hawk: Extended unfavorable weather conditions at the end of Sep through early Oct made for the poorest flight in memory. For the first time, the Broad-winged total at Hitchcock surpassed the Swainson's total, which was a mere 419 birds. More than half of these passed through on the same day, 1 Oct, in defiance of a stalled cold front the previous day. Away from Hitchcock, there were only two reports of more than one bird: 5 in Algona *Kossuth* 2 Oct (MCK), and 4 near Pioneer Fields *Polk* 3 Oct (JG). The last was 1 at Saylorville 10 Oct (AB).

Red-tailed Hawk: The biggest push came on 21 Oct following the season's first major windy cold front, which also brought thousands of waterfowl into the state. Both hawk watches recorded their red-tailed peaks: 178 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP) and 296 at Hitchcock *Pottawattamie* (JT).

Rough-legged Hawk: The first two arrived on 20 Oct ahead of a major front, one in *Webster* (DJN) and another in *Decatur* (JLi).

Golden Eagle: The first was a subadult at Prairie Heritage *O'Brien* 11 Oct (DB-details). Aside from the 13 counted at Hitchcock *Pottawattamie* (JT) and 6 more at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP), there were three others: 1 ad in *Decatur* 3 Nov (JRL-details), 1 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 11 Nov (RG), and 1 ad at Saylorville 19 Nov (AB).

Merlin: 1 on 20 Aug *Decatur* (JLi) was 3rd-earliest. The next two were 1 at Algona *Kossuth* 26 Aug (MCK) and 1 at Glendale Cemetery *Polk* 28 Aug (JEB). Very widely reported including a record season total of 36 at Hitchcock (JT).

Peregrine Falcon: At least 79 individuals reported from 14 counties by 15 observers. The season total of 46 at Hitchcock was a record (JT).

Prairie Falcon: 1 at Dugout Slough *Dickinson* 10 Oct (ET-details) was the only report with details.

Yellow Rail: Reported flushing off dry prairie ahead of seed-harvesting combines in *Marshall* 5–13 Oct (Carl Kurtz) and *Kossuth* 27 Sep (Tom Skilling). Also found in *Worth* 16 Oct (Kelcey Brockmeyer *fide* SJD), and *Muscatine* 17 Oct (Kristin Kuennen *fide* SJD).

Virginia Rail: The last at Errington M *Polk* 1 Nov (BE) was nearly a month after the next-to-last at Sedan *Appanoose* (RLC).

Sora: Still found in groups of more than 20 at Riverton *Fremont* 29 Sep (KDy) and Sunken Grove WA *Pocahontas* 1 Oct (SSP). Last was 1 at Wickiup Hill *Linn* 20 Oct (BSc).

Common Moorhen: After summering at Cardinal M *Winneshiek*, the last 5 were seen there 3 Sep (DC, EB). The last in the north was 1 at Myre Sl *Winnebago* 5

Sep (RG). An ad with 6 young was found at Cone M *Louisa* 10 Sep (JWR). Last of the season was 1 at Banner WA *Warren* 7 Oct (JG).

American Coot: The annual spectacle of huge rafts did not disappoint: 24,000 were counted at Pool #9 *Allamakee* 17 Oct (USFWS), 10,000 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 7 Oct (ET), and 6,725 at Saylorville 20 Oct (SJD).

Sandhill Crane: All: Up to 4 at Dunbar Sl *Greene* 12–19 Aug (JB, SJD, JG, DTh), 2 or 3 at Chichaqua WA *Polk* 2 Aug–3 Sep (AB, RIC), 3 at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* 13–19 Sep (DC), 4 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 21 Oct (JT), a juv at various locations in Ames, most notably on the ISU campus beginning 12 Nov (HZ, m.ob), 15 over Burlington *Des Moines* 27 Nov (JWR), and 1 or 2 at Otter Creek M *Tama* through the end of the season (MP, DP).

Black-bellied Plover: Eight widely scattered reports of singles starting with 1 at Saylorville 3 Aug (RIA, PHA); plus: 9 in *Fremont* 24 Aug (KDy), 2 at Saylorville 17–22 Sep (AB, JG, JB), 10 at Runnells WA *Marion* 30 Sep (SJD, JB), and 5 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 13 Oct (JG). Last was 1 at Cherry Glen *Polk* 24 Oct (AB, JB).

American Golden Plover: The first few migrants were singles: 1 at Dunbar Sl *Greene* 2 Sep (JG), 1 at Credit Is *Scott* 14 Sep (WMZ) and 1 at Saylorville 14 Sep (JB). The only large flocks were in *Kossuth*: 260 on 3 Oct (MCK) and 135 on 11 Oct (CJF). The last 5 were in a flooded field south of Algona 14 Nov (MCK).

Semipalmated Plover: Already present in July, the most were groups of 22 at Saylorville 2 Aug (SJD) and 21 at Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug (SSP). The last 3 were at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 27 Sep (DP).

Piping Plover: Two juvs were still at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* 12 Aug (SJD, JB). 1 or 2 were also seen at Saylorville Res *Polk* 2–23 Aug (SJD, JG, AB, JB), and 2 were in *Fremont* 24 Aug (KDy).

American Avocet: Reported from eight locations, most consistently, Saylorville Res 2 Aug–21 Oct. The highest concentrations all occurred on 21 Oct, the last day any were found– 41 at Saylorville (SJD), 32 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* (RLC), and 10 at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG).

Spotted Sandpiper: The last was 1 at Jester P *Polk* 13 Oct (DP).

Solitary Sandpiper: The most were 45 at Hendrickson M *Story* 15 Aug, and the last was 1 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 7 Oct (AB).

Greater Yellowlegs: With good habitat scarce, the only concentrations were 27 at Hendrickson M *Story* 15 Aug (SSP) and 26 in *Union* 11 Sep (JRL). The last was 1 on 4 Nov at Saylorville (SJD).

Willet: All: 1 at Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug (SSP), 4 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 8 Aug (BSc), and 1 at Saylorville 23 Aug (JG, SJD, AB).

Lesser Yellowlegs: In early Aug, before the heavy rains, Lesser Yellowlegs foraged in groups of several hundred (SJD, AB, SSP). But after 15 Aug, the most anywhere was a mere 26 at Jester P *Polk* 6 Oct (JG). The last was 1 at Saylorville 16 Nov (AB).

Upland Sandpiper: All: 1 near Nevada *Story* 1 Aug (HZ), 3 at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 14 Aug (GLV), 1 in *Decatur* 21 Aug (JRL), and 1 at Saylorville 8 Sep (SJD).

WHIMBREL: One photographed at Spirit L *Dickinson* 8 Aug (*Jonathan Vande Kopple) was only the 6th fall record for this species (last recorded 1996).

Marbled Godwit: The only one was at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* 23 Sep (POR).

Ruddy Turnstone: One was at Saylorville 19 Aug (JG), and another there 13 Sep was aged as a juv (SJD).

Red Knot: Three adults were along

the Des Moines R *Marion* 4 Aug (*SJD, *JG-ph), a single juv was at Hendrickson M *Story* 28 Aug–3 Sep (SSP-details, MP-details, DP, RIA, PHA), and another juv was at Diamond L *Dickinson* 2–4 Sep (*SJD-ph, *JG-ph, SSP-details, POR, JHW).

Sanderling: Reported in low numbers from 7 locations. The most were 9 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 5–8 Aug (DP, BSc), and 9 at Saylorville 15–16 Sep (BE, DTh). The last 2 were at Saylorville 19 Oct (AB).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Very hard to find after 5 Aug when record rains flooded much of the state's shorelines. There were only 5 reports after that date, none involving more than 10 birds, with the last 1 juv on 13 Oct at Saylorville (SJD).

Western Sandpiper: One was at Hendrickson M *Story* 23 Aug (SSP-details) and 2 were at Little Sioux WA *Clay* 27 Aug (LAS-details).

Least Sandpiper: The most was 332 at Saylorville 2 Aug (AB, SJD) and the last was 1 at the same location 15 Oct (AB).

White-rumped Sandpiper: A single report of this rare fall migrant had no details.

Baird's Sandpiper: Reported from only five locations: up to 4 were at Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug–3 Sep (SSP, DP, MP), as many as 36 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 2–6 Sep (SJD, SSP, JHW, WO), 2 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 23 Sep (DP), 1 at Port Neal *Woodbury* 6 Oct (POR), and at Saylorville 7 on 15–19 Sep (BE, SSP) and a single there until 6 Nov (SJD, AB).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Several thousand adults had already arrived along the Des Moines R reservoir system in July (Dinsmore 2007) and built to about 2,350 by 2 Aug (AB, SJD). But record rains began early in the month, driving nearly all birds from the state and leaving little habitat for later-arriving juveniles. The statewide season total after 3 Aug was an incredible 32 birds, and that included a group of 23 at Riverton WA *Fremont* 13 Oct (KDy). The last was one bird in the company of snipe in a *Kossuth* flooded field 11 Nov (MCK).

Dunlin: All: 3 in *Hancock* 3 Oct (RG), 5 at Saylorville 13 Oct (SJD), 3 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 13 Oct (JG), 1 at Saylorville 1–2 Nov (SJD, AB, JG), and 1 in *Kossuth* 11–14 Nov (MCK).

Stilt Sandpiper: The most were 91 at Saylorville 5 Aug (AB). Also reported in much smaller numbers in *Story*, *Marion*, *Johnson*, *Dickinson*, and *Union*. The last 13 were at Saylorville on 13 Oct (SJD).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Up to 35 were at Saylorville through 4 Aug (SJD-ph, AB, DTh, JHW, JG), fewer after that, with 1 still there on 18 Aug (JG). Also 10 at Nauman Sod Farm *Johnson* 5 Aug (DP), up to 27 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 5–8 Aug (MHB, BSc), 1 intermittently found at Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug–3 Sep (SSP, MP, POR), 1 at Dunbar Sl *Greene* 2 Sep (SJD), and the last near Farragut *Fremont* 8 Sep (KDy).

Short-billed Dowitcher: Only five reports of 3 or fewer birds, with the last 2 at Cherry Glen *Polk* 23 Aug (JB).

Long-billed Dowitcher: The first was a juv at Saylorville 19 Sep (SSP-details). There were seven other reports with the most 107 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 6–13 Oct (LAS, JG), and the last 24 at Port Neal *Woodbury* 21 Oct (POR).

Wilson's Snipe: First two: 1 at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* 13 Aug (DC) and 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 15 Aug (WO). The most were 54 in *Kossuth* 11 Nov (MCK).

American Woodcock: As many as 10 were still easy to find 10 Aug in *Decatur* (JLi) where they "seemed to be everywhere this year." But the only other report in the state was a late bird near Fort Dodge *Webster* 28 Oct (MCK).

Wilson's Phalarope: All: 2 at Saylorville 16 Aug (AB), and up to 5 at Hendrickson M *Story* 23 Aug–3 Sep (SSP).

Red-necked Phalarope: All: 1 at Runnells WA *Marion* 11 Aug (JG), 2 at Saylorville 17 Aug (SJD), 2 at Hendrickson M *Story* 23 Aug–3 Sep (SSP, MP, DP), 21 found at Diamond L *Dickinson* 27 Aug (ET, LAS) increased to 75 by 9 Sep (WO, SJD-ph), 5 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 2 Sep (JG, SJD), 2 at Welch L *Dickinson* 7 Sep (TLu), and the last 2 at Saylorville 17 Sep (AB).

RED PHALAROPE: A juv was found by AB at Saylorville 18 Sep (*AB-ph, *SJD-ph, *JG-ph) and stayed another day. A second juv was found at the same place a month later on 20 Oct (*SJD, *JG).

LAUGHING GULL: A 2nd-year bird was photographed at Crandall's Beach on Spirit L *Dickinson* 18 Aug (*Ron Martin, *Corey Ellingson, *Dean Riemer), and another 2nd-year bird was found by JG at Red Rock 6 Oct (*JG-ph, *AB-ph, SSP, DP).

Franklin's Gull: Passed through in massive flocks in early-mid Oct. ET estimated 30,000 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 7 Oct; 18,000 at Saylorville 3 Oct (AB) grew to 23,067 13 Oct (SJD); 13,000 were at Lost Island L *Palo Alto* 13 Oct (LAS); 10,000 were at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* 12 Oct (LP). The last 25 were at South Twin L *Calhoun* 12 Nov (SSP).

LITTLE GULL: A juv was found by SJD and JG at Welch L *Dickinson* 2 Sep (*JG-ph, *SJD, *SSP-ph). It was last seen 6 Sep (WO).

Black-headed Gull: The annual appearance of an adult at Spirit L *Dickinson* continued with ET first finding it 28 Jul at the usual location near the footbridge off the grade (Dinsmore 2007). Seen and photographed by many, it stayed until 26 Oct (ET).

Bonaparte's Gull: Singles were found 2 Sep *Dickinson* (SJD, JG) and 6 Sep–3 Oct *Polk* (SSP, JB, AB, DP), before the first group of 200 at Rathbun L *Appanoose* 21 Oct (RLC). Other large groups: 487 at Saylorville 23 Oct (SJD, AB), and 416 at Red Rock *Marion* 4 Nov (JG, SJD). The last was 1 at Saylorville 30 Nov (AB).

BLACK-TAILED GULL: New to Iowa, casual to North America, an adult in basic plumage was found by SJD the morning of 17 Nov after scanning Saylorville Res *Polk* from atop the dam. Over the next two weeks, the bird's habit of roosting in the vicinity of the marina made viewing fairly reliable and many people from near and far were able to get good looks and spectacular photos. Following rapid ice formation over most of the water's surface, the gull disappeared 6 Dec (*SJD-ph, *JG-ph, *AB-ph, *JB, *CC, *GW, *CRE).

MEW GULL: A juv was at Red Rock Res *Marion* 11–25 Nov (*AB-ph, *SJD-ph, *JG-ph).

Herring Gull: The first was an adult at Spirit L *Dickinson* 2 Sep (JG, BJU, ET).

Thayer's Gull: The first was an early juv at Lake Manawa *Pottawattamie* 23 Oct (POR). Also: 1 at L&D 14 *Scott* 31 Oct (SMF), 2 juvs at Red Rock *Marion* 17–26 Nov (AB, JG, SJD, AMJ), and 2nd-winter bird at Saylorville 27 Nov (AB, JG).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: An ad was at Saylorville 15–18 Oct (JRL, JG, AB), a juv was at Red Rock *Marion* 21 Oct (JG), and a 3rd-winter bird was at L&D 14 *Scott* 9–19 Nov (SMF).

Glaucous Gull: A juv at Red Rock *Marion* on 12-26 Nov (AB, AMJ, SMF, MP) was 2nd-earliest. A 2nd-winter bird was at L&D 14 *Scott* 19 Nov (SMF).

Sabine's Gull: Up to 3 at a time could be found at Saylorville 11 Sep–18 Oct (SJD, AB, JG, RLC, DP). Elsewhere: 1 at Red Rock 23 Sep (JG) and another on 30 Sep (JG,

SJD), 1 at Gray's L *Polk* 26 Sep (AB), 1 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 28–30 Sep (BJU, Denny Martin), 1 at Lizard L *Pocahontas* 1 Oct (SSP), and 1 or 2 at Lake Manawa *Pottawattamie* 7–23 Oct (KDy, POR, LP). All birds were juvs except 1 ad 11 Oct at Saylorville (SJD).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: An ad found at Lake Manawa 17 Oct (*Al Reyer-ph, *TLu-ph, KDy, LP) was 2nd earliest.

Least Tern: Eighteen (8 ad, 10 juv) were at MidAmerican Energy Ponds *Pottawattamie* 12 Aug (AB, JB, SJD). There were 6 reports away from their breeding area: 1 juv at Dunbar Sl *Greene* 14 Aug (SJD), 1 at Rapp P *Page* 14 Aug (KDy), 4 ad and 1 juv at Saylorville 21 Aug (Scott Rolfes *fide* SJD), 1 color-banded juv (from South Dakota) at Saylorville 23 Aug (SJD, AB, JG), 1 juv at Welch L *Dickinson* 4 Sep (SSP), and 3 in *Union* 11 Sep were 3rd-latest (JRL).

Caspian Tern: Scarce this fall, with most reports singles; but three small pockets of 31 on 28 Sep *Story* (SSP), 34 on 29 Sep *Linn* (BSc) and 54 on 2 Sep *Appanoose* (RLC) were different. The last 2 were at Saylorville 8 Oct (AB, SJD).

Black Tern: The largest group was 279 at Saylorville 16 Aug (AB), where the last also was found on 24 Sep (AB).

Common Tern: All Common Tern reports with details involved less than 7 birds and came from Saylorville 2 Aug–19 Oct (JG, SJD, AB, SSP). The last of these, a juv on 19 Oct, was 2nd-latest.

Forster's Tern: The last 2 were at Saylorville 23 Oct (SJD, AB).

LONG-TAILED JAEGER: A juv intermediate morph found at Saylorville 11 Sep (*SJD, *JG) did not linger even into the afternoon [3rd state record]. A second jaeger photographed as a silhouette against a bright sky on 19 Nov in *Hardin*, could not be identified to species.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: A report from *Cass* (JG) apparently brings to 70 the number of Iowa's 99 counties in which this species has been found.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: An adult carrying food 16 Aug in *Story* (SSP) indicated at least one pair still nesting. The last bird was seen in *Decatur* 23 Sep (JRL).

Black-billed Cuckoo: The only family group was 1 ad, 2 juvs in *Linn* 3 Sep (BSc). All other reports were singles with the last 1 at Lime Creek *Cerro Gordo* 20 Sep (RG).

Eastern Screech Owl: Ten reports from 7 counties included two red morphs.

Snowy Owl: A juv fem was in *Story* 13–18 Nov (Steve Lekwa *fide* HZ, SJD).

Long-eared Owl: The first was 1 at Moorehead P *Ida* 30 Oct (Don Poggensee), then 1 in *Appanoose* 10 Nov (JG). The most was 4 at Lime Creek *Cerro Gordo* 18 Nov (PH).

Short-eared Owl: First two: 1 at Union Sl NWR *Kossuth* 12 Oct (MCK), and 1 at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* 31 Oct (KVS). Also reported from *Decatur*, *Linn, Tama*, and *Woodbury*. Most: 4 at two locations.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: The first was an injured bird found in *Story* 24 Oct (Jessica Lewis *fide* SJD). Another Oct bird was in the city of Des Moines 27 Oct (Tom Rosburg). Also: 1 in Ames 5 Nov (Jan & Ross Conover *fide* SJD), 1 at Lime Creek *Cerro Gordo* 18 Nov (PH), and 1 at Thorpe P *Winnebago* 23 Nov (JB). Six were banded at HNC *Pottawattamie* in late Nov (JT) (see p. 15).

Common Nighthawk: A steady migration with no really massive flights. The highest count was 67 in Mason City 19 Sep (PH). The last would have been the single over my backyard 7 Oct, but a first-ever November record was overhead in Des Moines 3 Nov (AB-details).

Whip-poor-will: No reports.

Chimney Swift: Last in the north, 2

in Algona 3 Oct (MCK); last in the state 1 on 7 Oct *Marshall* (DP). SSP counted 578 migrating down the Des Moines R corridor in *Boone* in one hour's time 23 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: The last was a feeder visitor in *Cherokee* on 14 Oct (DB). A spectacular leucistic hummingbird with structural characteristics of a Ruby-throated was photographed in a Mt Pleasant *Henry* yard (LH, JH-ph) where it was reliable daily 5–10 Sep.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 114 were counted in *Decatur* 11 Oct (NJM), and another 100 there on 26 Nov (JLi)

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: An imm in Algona *Kossuth* 18 Aug may have been a local fledgling (MCK).

Pileated Woodpecker: Sightings in *Decatur* (NJM) and *Kossuth* (MCK) were the only ones away from eastern or central Iowa.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: First two: 1 in *Story* 14 Aug (WO), and 1 in *Warren* 16 Aug (JS). There were 26 reports from 15 counties, with the last 1 in *Cherokee* 26 Sep (DB).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: The last was 1 in *Marion* 30 Sep (SJD). RLC counted 20 at Lacey Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* 1 Sep.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: The first was 1 at Jester Park *Polk* 18 Aug (DTh-details). Widely reported with the last in *Woodbury* 23 Sep (POR).

Acadian Flycatcher: The last was singing in *Decatur* 3 Sep (NJM).

Alder Flycatcher: The first return was found and heard calling at Hendrickson M *Marshall* 8 Aug (MP). Last was 1 in Algona 29 Aug (MCK-details).

Willow Flycatcher: The last was 1 at Ledges SP *Boone* 23 Aug (JHW).

Least Flycatcher: The last three were 24, 25, 26 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM), *Hardin* (MP), *Kossuth* (MCK).

Eastern Phoebe: A late family group of 4 was at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 14 Oct (PH). Last was a juv in *Wright* 28 Oct (MCK).

Great Crested Flycatcher: The last was 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 16 Sep (WO).

Western Kingbird: Three were in rural *Mills* 11 Aug (JG). There were five other reports with the last 1 at Sioux Center 31 Aug (JVD).

Eastern Kingbird: On 2 Sep, at least 581 migrants were counted along 14 miles of road around Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD, JG). The last 2 were in *Marion* 16 Sep (AB).

FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER: On 20 Nov, amid a flurry of listserv posts updating the location of the Black-tailed Gull at Saylorville, the birding community was stunned to read a contribution from MAG: "I was surprised to see a Fork-tailed Flycatcher today at the intersection of Hwy V18 and 240th, just north of Clutier." Later, she posted a definitive photo to support her *Tama* report of Iowa's first record for this tropical species. The next day, most of the state was hit with the season's first major snowfall, but a few resolute birders were able to find and photograph the bird. It survived its unlikely, snowy landscape at least through 23 Nov, then vanished, last seen flying *north* (*MAG-ph, *AMJ-ph, *JG-ph, *GW, *CRE, *CC, DP).

Loggerhead Shrike: Reports continued in the extreme south, *Page*, *Decatur*, after the first Northern Shrikes appeared in late Oct.

Northern Shrike: First few: 1 near Stratford *Hamilton* (DJN) and 1 in *Clay* (LAS) both on 21 Oct, then another in *Polk* 22 Oct (AB). In all, 32 reports from 24 counties.

White-eyed Vireo: The only report was 1 in *Clarke* 8 Sep (JS).

Bell's Vireo: The last was 1 near Sparks Cemetery *Boone* 17 Sep (LGD).

Yellow-throated Vireo: The most was

a report of 6 on 8 Sep in *Boone* (JHW), and the last 2 were in *Decatur* 23 Sep (JRL).

Blue-headed Vireo: First: 1 at Brookside P *Story* 24 Aug (SSP). Reports trickled through Sep and into Oct with the last 2 on 18 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM).

Warbling Vireo: JG counted 31 at Red Rock *Marion* 8 Sep. The last was 1 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 9 Sep (DP).

Philadelphia Vireo: The first was found 16 Aug in *Linn* (BSc), and the last was 1 in *Delaware* 29 Sep (AB).

Red-eyed Vireo: High counts in excessive of 20 occurred in several locations in early Sep (CRE, JHW, JG). More than a month after birders stopped detecting Red-eyed Vireos in the field, SJD captured one in his yard 1 Nov [3rd latest].

Blue Jay: A movement of about 4,000 was detected at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 25 Sep (JT), the same day 559 were counted in about an hour's time at the E41 bridge *Boone* (SSP).

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER: A single bird in rural *Guthrie* 16 Sep was seen briefly but well enough to document (*HZ). The bird apparently was on the move, as it could not be located later. This is Iowa's 7th record; the last was in 1996.

RAVEN *species*: A single individual was documented in *Pottawattamie* 11 Sep.

Purple Martin: No one reported the usual large fall gatherings; in fact, no Iowans reported any at all. A visitor from Minnesota reported a lone bird in *Dickinson* 2 Sep (BJU).

Tree Swallow: Migrated through Iowa in surges. About 8,000 were counted gathering near Pleasantville *Marion* 16 Sep (AB), followed by a gradual accumulation at Saylorville peaking at 9,000 on 11 Oct (SJD). Reports dropped off, but another surge of several hundred appeared over Saylorville during the IOU Fall Meeting in the last days of Oct. The last 2 were at Harrier M *Boone* 4 Nov (LGD).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: The last few were late: 50 at Gray's L *Polk* 12 Oct (JB) were 3rd-latest, and 7 in *Scott* 21 Oct (RAS) were 2nd-latest.

Bank Swallow: A final group of 360 were over Diamond L *Dickinson* 4 Sep (SSP), except for 1 at Hawkeye *Johnson* 9 Sep (DP).

Cliff Swallow: The most were 600 over Hendrickson M *Story* 3 Aug (SSP). The last was 1 at Hawkeye *Johnson* 9 Sep (DP).

CAVE SWALLOW: Iowa's first Cave Swallow was spotted by SJD on 26 Oct while sifting through a steady stream of Tree Swallows on the east shore of Saylorville Res *Polk* (*SJD). The arrival of this species has been much anticipated, but particularly difficult to substantiate. With a gradually expanding range situated directly south of Iowa, the species can be expected only to send us a few spring overshoots, or wandering fall migrants to be picked out of the air.

Barn Swallow: The last 2 were in *Kossuth* on 25 Oct (MCK) and *Polk* on 26 Oct (SJD).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: After summer nestings in at least three locations (Dinsmore 2007), Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported widely from the very first day of the season. Of the many reports, five were of 8 or more birds.

Brown Creeper: The first two were 1 in *Winneshiek* 16 Sep (Lee Zieke *fide* DC) and 1 in *Linn* 17 Sep (DP).

Carolina Wren: One in Mason City on 4 Aug was the only report from the north (PH).

House Wren: The last was 1 in *Decatur* 16 Oct (JLi).

Winter Wren: First few: 1 in *Johnson* 22 Sep (RD), 1 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 26 Sep (MP), and 1 in *Story* 28 Sep (SSP).

Of 24 reports, the most was 12 at Call SP *Kossuth* 1 Oct (MCK), and the last was 1 in *Decatur* 18 Nov (JRL).

Sedge Wren: 14 were still at Chipera Prairie *Winneshiek* 14 Oct (DC), but the last was 1 at Rapp P *Page* 2 Nov (KDy).

Marsh Wren: The last 4 were at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 3 Nov (POR).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: The first was early on 10 Sep at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* (Lee Zieke *fide* DC) [3rd-earliest]. Reported in *Decatur* through the end of the season (JRL).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: The first was 1 at Welch L *Dickinson* 2 Sep (SJD). Daily high counts of 20–28 were reported in Oct (SSP, SJD, LGD), and the last was 1 in *Decatur* 3 Nov (NJM).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Reports ended in late Sep, except for an extremely late bird on 9 Nov at Lizard L *Pocahontas* (Bob Nickolson *fide* CJF) [3rd-latest].

Townsend's Solitaire: Two reports: 1 at a traditional location in Waterman Township *O'Brien* (LAS, TLu) first noticed 11 Nov, and a second at Lansing WMA *Allamakee* 23 Nov (JG-ph).

Veery: The last was 1 at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* 12 Sep (TL).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: First detected when as many as 17 were counted as nocturnal migrants over Ames 7, 8 Sep (SSP, SJD). There were only three sight reports, with the last an unusual cluster of 5 that flushed from the undergrowth at Call SP *Kossuth* 1 Oct, paused briefly in a leafless tree, then flew off together (MCK).

Swainson's Thrush: The first two reports were on 22 Aug in *Marshall* (MP) and *Cerro Gordo* (RG). Nocturnal migrants heard: on 7 Sep, 46 in Grimes (JB) and 27 in Ames (SSP), on 8 Sep, 116 in Ames (SJD). The last was 1 at Pleasant Creek RA *Linn* 11 Oct (DP).

Hermit Thrush: First reported on Oct 1 at two locations: 2 at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP) and 8 at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). There were only ten sight reports, and none after 4 seen at Brookside P *Story* 16 Oct (SSP).

Wood Thrush: All: 1 at Sedan *Appanoose* 15 Aug (RLC), and 2 at Brookside P *Story* 9 Sep (SSP).

Gray Catbird: The last was 1 found at Big Creek *Polk* 28 Oct (SJD) during an IOU morning field trip.

Northern Mockingbird: Reported in *Decatur*, *Hamilton*, *Marion*, *Page*, *Scott* and *Wayne*, including a family group of 3 at Red Rock 1 Sep (JG).

American Pipit: The first was a group of 8 overhead at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 13 Oct (BSc-details). Some observers commented pipits were hard to find this fall, and seven of the twelve reports were of single birds. There was one large flock of 100 at Rapp P *Page* 10 Oct (KDy). The last was 1 at a *Kossuth* flooded field 14 Nov (MCK).

Blue-winged Warbler: Eleven reports from east and central Iowa with the last 1 at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* 14 Sep (DC). Among the reports, a Brewster's Warbler was reported from Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RG).

Golden-winged Warbler: The first 3 were at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 14 Aug (RG). There were 26 reports of as many as 5 at a time, with the last a group of 5 at Pilot Knob SP 14 Sep *Hancock* (RG).

Tennessee Warbler: The first was 1 at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* 12 Aug (Lee Zieke *fide* DC). RLC counted 40 at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* 1 Sep. The last was 1 at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* 13 Oct (TLu).

Orange-crowned Warbler: Except for an early report at Squaw Creek P in *Linn* on 8 Sep (BSc), reports were steady from 17 Sep in *Boone* (JHW) to the last two on

21, 22 Oct (WO, DC). On 26 Sep, 70 were counted in small groups along the Des Moines R in Algona foraging with Nashville Warblers and chickadees (MCK).

Nashville Warbler: The first 2 were at Brookside P *Story* 17 Aug (SSP) and the last was 1 at Pleasant Creek SP *Linn* 23 Oct (BSc).

Northern Parula: Of nine locations reported, Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (GLV) was the only one in the west and Pilot Knob SP *Hancock* was the only one in the north. The last 2 were at Manhatten P *Linn* 28 Sep (BSc) and Backbone SP *Delaware* 29 Sep (AB).

Yellow Warbler: The last 2 were at Dean *Appanoose* 2 Sep (RLC).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: The first migrant was 1 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 14 Aug (RG). High counts were 16 at Brookside P *Story* 24 Aug (SSP) and 28 in *Polk* 29 Aug (AB). The last was very late in Buffalo *Scott* 14 Oct (RAS) [3rd-latest].

Magnolia Warbler: First few: 1 at Waterworks P *Polk* 13 Aug (JB) and 2 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 15 Aug (RG). The last was 1 in Cedar Rapids *Linn* 29 Sep (DP).

Cape May Warbler: Only four reports: 1 at Red Rock *Marion* 1 Sep (JG), 2 at Hooper WA *Warren* 3 Sep (AB), 1 at Pine L *Hardin* 14 Sep (MP), and 1 in Cedar Rapids *Linn* 11 Oct (BSc).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: All: A fem at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* 11 Sep (Pete Wickham *fide* BSc), a fem at Pilot Knob SP *Hancock* 12 Sep (RG), a male in CJF's Mason City yard 23 Sep, and a fem at Brookside P *Story* 11 Oct (SSP).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: The first 4 were at Eagle Point P *Dubuque* 2 Sep (CLW). The high count was 120 in *Decatur* 11 Oct (NJM). The last was 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 9 Nov (WO).

Black-throated Green Warbler: The first of 12 reports was 1 at Lake Meyer *Winneshiek* 19 Aug (Larry Reis *fide* DC), and the last was 1 at Ledges SP *Boone* 16 Oct (Karl Jungbluth *fide* SSP).

Blackburnian Warbler: There were 27 widely scattered reports, with the first a 2nd-earliest individual at Waterworks P *Polk* 5 Aug (RIA, PHA), and the last in *Decatur* 23 Sep (NJM).

Yellow-throated Warbler: All: 2 ad and 1 juv at Waterworks P *Polk* 7 Aug (JB) and 2 reports from Ledges SP *Boone* 28 Aug (JHW) and 2 Sep (DJN).

Pine Warbler: All: 1 at Saylorville *Polk* 28 Aug (AB), 1 at Red Rock *Marion* 8 Sep (JG), 1 at Mt Calvary Cem *Linn* 28 Sep (BSc), no Oct reports, then a first-ever Nov record when a fem/juv was at a Mason City feeder 15–17 Nov (*CJF-ph, PH-ph, RG), and a second-ever Nov record when a fem/juv was at an Ames feeder 27 Nov (SJD-details). There are four Dec records.

Palm Warbler: Very hard to find. The first was a bit early on 1 Sep at Red Rock *Marion* (JG-details). There were three other reports within the normal window, followed by a late report in *Story* on 26 Oct (WO).

Bay-breasted Warbler: All sixteen reports were of 1 or 2 individuals only, in contrast to last fall. The first was 1 at Waterworks P *Polk* 21 Aug (JB), and the last 2 were found 23 Sep in *Marion* (JG) and *Johnson* (DP).

Blackpoll Warbler: Extremely scarce with only two reports: 1 at Waterworks P *Polk* 24 Aug (RIA, PHA) and 1 in *Woodbury* 12 Sep (POR).

Cerulean Warbler: The only report was a late bird at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* 12 Sep (*TL).

Black-and-white Warbler: Migrants first appeared in the north on 11 Aug at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RG). Reported steadily with many high counts in excess of

10 until 5 at Brookside P *Story* 14 Sep (SSP). After that, it was singles only until the last on 25 Sep at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

American Redstart: Many reports from eastern and central counties, with the last 1 at Brookside P *Story* 22 Sep (SSP).

Prothonotary Warbler: Two reports: 1 at Sedan *Appanoose* 15 Aug (RLC) and 1 at Manhattan P *Linn* 18 Aug (DP).

Ovenbird: A late bird was videotaped in the Patterson's yard in Ames, where it stayed five days until 4 Oct (*SSP).

Northern Waterthrush: First few: 2 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 14 Aug (RG), and 1 at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* 15 Aug (Lee Zieke *fide* DC). The last was 1 at Backbone SP *Delaware* 29 Sep (AB).

Connecticut Warbler: A single report came from Ada Hayden P *Story* 4 Oct (WO-details) [2nd-latest].

Mourning Warbler: 1–3 birds reported from twelve locations beginning with 1 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* on 15 Aug (RG), and ending with 1 at Brookside P *Story* 14 Sep (SSP). Those who aged their birds reported a total of 8 adults and 4 juvs.

Common Yellowthroat: The last was 1 at Kent P *Johnson* 3 Oct (DP).

Wilson's Warbler: The first of many was 1 at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 15 Aug (RG). As many as 11 at a time were in Brookside P *Story* in late Aug (SSP). The last was 1 at Ledges SP *Boone* 28 Sep (JHW).

Canada Warbler: Following the first at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* 14 Aug (JHW), reports of 1–6 continued nearly daily through the second-to-last bird at Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* 11 Sep (GLV). The last bird was much later, on 1 Oct at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (E&E Armstrong *fide* MP) [3rd-latest].

Yellow-breasted Chat: No reports.

Summer Tanager: The last was a male at L Ahquabi *Warren* 22 Sep (JS).

Scarlet Tanager: As many as five were found in Lacey Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* 1 Sep (RLC). The last was 1 at Lost Planet *Polk* 23 Sep (RIC).

Spotted Towhee: The first few of ten reports were 2 at Silver Sioux *Cherokee* 27 Sep (DB), 1 at Saylorville *Polk* 9 Oct (AB), then 1 in *Decatur* 11 Oct (NJM).

Eastern Towhee: Adults with juvs were reported in *Iowa* into early Sep (MHB); singles were reported through the end of the season.

American Tree Sparrow: First few: 2 near Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 13 Oct (PH), 1 at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* 14 Oct (DC), and 1 at Pine L SP *Hardin* 19 Oct (MP).

Chipping Sparrow: The last few were all juvs: 1 in Algona 29 Oct (MCK), 2 at Big Creek *Polk* 1 Nov (SJD), and 1 in *Decatur* 7 Nov (NJM).

Clay-colored Sparrow: There were six reports of this enigmatic fall migrant, but none with any details. This would be a good species to photograph in the fall.

Field Sparrow: As many as 20 juvs and 10 adults were in a rural *Boone* yard 27 Aug (LGD). The last was 1 at Rapp P *Page* 12 Nov (KDy).

Vesper Sparrow: The last 2 were noted 3 Nov in *Boone* (SJD) and *Decatur* (NJM).

Lark Sparrow: The only Sep report was of 3 in *Woodbury* 13 Sep (TLu). A very late report in Nov had no details.

Savannah Sparrow: Began flocking in Oct: 40 in *Appanoose* 7 Oct (RLC), 80 in *Kossuth* 7 Oct (MCK), and 30 in *Decatur* 16 Oct (JLi). The last was 1 in *Decatur* 21 Nov (NJM).

Grasshopper Sparrow: All: 1 at Brenton Arboretum *Dallas* 13 Oct (JB), 1 at Jim Ketelsen M *Story* 20 Oct (SSP), and 1 in *Dectaur* 21 Oct (NJM).

Henslow's Sparrow: The last 2 were at Sugema L *Van Buren* 6 Oct (JWR-details)

and Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* 16 Oct (KVS-details).

Le Conte's Sparrow: 30 reports from 13 counties, starting with 2 at Wildin Prairie *Kossuth* 19 Sep (MCK). High counts of 12 or more came from Sedan *Appanoose* (RLC), Errington M *Polk* (JJD, AB, SJD), Big Creek *Polk* (AB), Chichaqua *Polk* (SSP, JHW), and Riverton *Fremont* (KDy), all in October. The last was 1 in *Decatur* 16 Nov (NJM).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: The first was found at Banner WA *Warren* 16 Sep (JS). Fifteen of the 20 reports were of single birds, but a notable exception was 34 at Sedan *Appanoose* 6 Oct (RLC), which appears to be a record high count. Also stayed very late, with 3 at Errington M *Polk* 24 Oct (SSP, JB-ph), and 2 at Chichaqua WA *Polk* 28 Oct (SSP-details, POR, JHW) [2nd-latest].

Fox Sparrow: The first, on 30 Sep in Ames (WO), was 11 days before the next arrival when a steady stream of reports began. 158 reported in *Decatur* 3 Nov (NJM) is the highest fall count I can find in searching 20 years of records.

Song Sparrow: High count: 90 at South Twin L *Calhoun* 1 Oct (SSP).

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first was 1 at McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* 8 Sep (RG). As many as 40 were counted in *Decatur* 11 Oct (NJM), and other high counts were 16 at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 27 Sep (GLV) and 18 at South Twin L *Calhoun* 1 Oct (SSP). The last was 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 1 Nov (WO).

White-throated Sparrow: On 8 Sep, arrived at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP) and McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* (RG), then Brookside P *Story* (SSP) and Burr Oak *Winneshiek* (Lee Zieke *fide* DC) the next day. NJM counted 186 in *Decatur* on 11 Oct.

Harris's Sparrow: The first 11 were at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* 23 Sep (POR). There were 16 reports from 11 counties with the most 25 at Chichaqua WA *Polk* 26 Oct (SSP).

White-crowned Sparrow: The first several of eight reports were 1 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 25 Sep (WO), 1 at Hurlburt WA *Kossuth* 28 Sep (MCK), and 1 at Wickiup *Linn* 28 Sep (DP). Also reported in *Decatur*, *Polk,* and *Scott*.

Dark-eyed Junco: The first was 1 in Buffalo *Scott* 26 Sep (RAS) followed by three more Sep reports.

Lapland Longspur: The first 12 were near Bobolink WPA *Kossuth* on 13 Oct (MCK), where the high count of 1,000 occurred 24 Oct. Other large flocks were 450 near South Twin L *Calhoun* 7 Nov (SSP), and 250 near Nevada *Story* 17 Nov (HZ).

Smith's Longspur: All: Up to 11 at Bobolink WPA *Kossuth* 13–24 Oct (MCK, JG), 1 at Errington M *Polk* 13 Oct (SJD, AB), 2–9 at Rapp P *Page* 19–31 Oct (KDy), 1–5 at Dewey's Pasture *Palo Alto* 21 Oct–4 Nov (LAS), 4 at Spring Run *Dickinson* 28 Oct (LAS), and 150 in a *Decatur* harvested grain field 10 Nov (JLi-details). The latter is the largest fall concentration in modern times.

Snow Bunting: The first was 1 at Saylorville Res *Polk* 24 Oct (AB, JB) where up to 22 were present by 25 Nov (SJD). Also reported from *Allamakee* (DC), *Boone* (KDy), *Johnson* (DP), *Kossuth* (MCK), *Winneshiek* (DC), and *Woodbury* (GLV, TLu).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: The last was 1 in *Decatur* 25 Sep (NJM, JLi).

Blue Grosbeak: Abruptly left on 12 Aug, the last day birds were seen in *Crawford* (JG, JB), *Fremont* (KDy), and *Pottawattamie* (JB).

Indigo Bunting: The last was a female seen well at Oak Grove RA *Polk* 13 Oct (DTh-details, m.ob).

Dickcissel: One at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 8 Sep (TLu) would have been the last were it not for another more than

a month later at Brenton Arboretum *Dallas* 13 Oct (JB).

Bobolink: Aug and Sep flocks in excess of 100 (SJD, NJM) dwindled to single digits by the end of Sep. The last were 5 at Errington M *Polk* 4 Oct (SJD), and then 1 at Banner WA *Warren* 7 Oct (JG).

Eastern Meadowlark: Birds were still singing at Sedan *Appanoose* 20 Oct (RLC) and rural *Decatur* 21 Oct (NJM).

Western Meadowlark: The last identified by voice were in *Decatur* 7 Nov (JLi).

Rusty Blackbird: Flocks of 12–53 showed up in *Story* and *Polk* 25–28 Oct (WO, MP, SSP, JS, JHW). The most was 75 at Ada Hayden P *Story* 1 Nov (WO). Also reported in *Calhoun* (SSP), *Decatur* (NJM), *Page* (KDy), *Winneshiek* (DC), and *Woodbury* (TLu).

Brewer's Blackbird: The first 22 were at Moeckley Prairie *Story* 23 Oct (SJD). Some high counts were 25 in *Decatur* 3 Nov (NJM), 75 in *Kossuth* 7 Nov (RG), and 40 in *Cerro Gordo* 11 Nov (CJF). The last was a fem at Otter Creek M *Tama* 12 Nov (MP).

Great-tailed Grackle: Some peak counts were 105 at Little Swan L *Dickinson* 6 Oct (LAS), and 200 near Banner WA *Warren* 25 Nov (AB). The easternmost report was 55 at Otter Creek M *Tama* 8 Nov (MP).

Brown-headed Cowbird: 6,000 near Banner WA *Warren* 30 Oct (AB) indicates brood parasitism continues to work well.

Orchard Oriole: A record-late bird was at Bronson *Woodbury* until 20 Oct (*TLu-ph).

Baltimore Oriole: The last was 1 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 9 Sep (DP).

Purple Finch: The first 2 were at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* 31 Aug (EB). Then, widely reported but in small numbers, never more than 6 at a time.

Red Crossbill: 35 at Carol Peaslee's acreage near Emmetsburg *Palo Alto* 10 Nov (Carol Peaslee *fide* LAS) were the most in the fall since 40 at Big Creek in 1986. All others: Up to 11 in Bronson *Woodbury* 23 Oct–9 Nov (TLu, POR-ph), 1 in Webster City *Hamilton* 3 Nov (DJN), and 10 at Hooper WA *Warren* 24 Nov (JS).

Common Redpoll: All 3 were yard birds: 1 on 11 Nov in a Cherokee yard (DB), 1 on 24–25 Nov in an Indianola yard (AMJ), and 1 on 20 Nov in an Adel yard (TL).

Pine Siskin: First few: 2 in Algona 28 Sep (MCK), and 2 in Ames 29 Sep (WO). Then arrived in numbers at the end of the second week of Oct beginning with 21 near Clear L *Cerro Gordo* 13 Oct (PH), followed by reports in *Winneshiek*, *Dickinson*, *Polk*, *Cherokee*, *Dallas*, *Marion*, *Scott*, *Marshall*, *Warren,* and *Dectaur* before the end of the month. In total, there were 29 reports from 17 counties. Other high counts were 31 in Spirit L *Dickinson* 26 Oct (ET) and 34 at Fairmount Cemetery *Scott* 24 Oct–30 Nov (WMZ).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: One on 3 Aug was a yard bird *Johnson* for CRE, another was at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 19 Aug and again 23 Sep (DP), and 7 were at Proske Ponds *Scott* 2 Nov (RAS).

COMMENT

This article is based on information contributed by 99 field observers whose names appear below and also in the text. In all, 3,489 reports were submitted including many photos and documentations. My thanks go to all who contributed data and especially for the many helpful details and clarifying remarks. These reports came from 74 of Iowa's 99 counties, although 70% of all data was collected in just ten counties: Polk, Story, Dickin-

son, Decatur, Marion, Johnson, Boone, Cerro Gordo, Marshall, and Woodbury. Perhaps a better picture is obtained by noting the reports came from 307 distinct locations in Iowa.

Summarized here is the fall presence of 268 species found in Iowa from 1 August to 30 November 2007. There were 26 other common year-round residents for which at least some data was submitted, but which are not included here. These species are Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Great Blue Heron, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

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Chris Edwards	CRE	Katy Patterson	KLP	Gerald Von Ehwegen	GLV
Bery Engebretsen	BE	Shane Patterson	SSP	Harley Winfrey	JHW
Carolyn Fischer	CJF	Jason Paulios	JPa	Charles Winterwood	CLW
Donna Flanagan	DF	Diana Pesek	DP	Hank Zaletel	HZ
Steven Freed	SMF	Willard Piercy	WP	Walter Zuurdeeg	WMZ
Jacob Gilliam	JG	Mark Proescholdt	MP		
Rita Goranson	RG	Paul Roisen	POR		

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Juvenile Red Phalarope, Oak Grove Beach, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk, *10 September 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

One of two juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-herons seen at Chichaqua Bottoms, Polk, *21 August 2007. Photograph by Richard Stilwell, West Des Moines, IA.*

Three of four Sandhill Cranes found at the north end of Dunbar Slough, Greene, *12 August 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Second-year Laughing Gull, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion, *6 October 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Juvenile Red Knot, Diamond Lake, Dickinson, *2 September 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Broad-winged Hawk, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion, *23 September 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Juvenile Mew Gull, Red Rock Reservoir, Marion, *18 November 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Townsend's Solitaire, Lansing WMA, Allamakee, *24 November 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

Black-tailed Gull at Saylorville Reservoir: First Iowa Record

Stephen J. Dinsmore

Figure 1. Black-tailed Gull, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk*, 25 November 2007. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*

On the morning of 17 November 2007, I arrived at the east pullout of the Saylorville Reservoir dam for a routine scan of the main lake. I quickly noticed a roosting flock of approximately 200 gulls on a sandbar along the east shore of the lake; many were trading back and forth from this flock to the middle of the lake where they were feeding. At 9 A.M. I took a last look at the roosting flock and was surprised to see a sleeping dark-mantled gull. The bird was toward the rear of the flock, partially obscured by other gulls, and I initially assumed it was a Lesser Black-backed Gull based on mantle color. Almost immediately, the other gulls began departing en masse, leaving this bird standing with a few Ring-billed Gulls. It was then that I noticed its small size; it was barely larger than a Ring-billed Gull. After less than a minute the bird awoke and immediately took flight. It spent the next 20 minutes feeding along the east shore of the lake, then slowly flew north and was last seen near the marina. The combination of size, the dark mantle and upperwings, and the distinct broad subterminal tail band identified the bird as an adult Black-tailed Gull (Figures 1 and 2, front cover).

When it was perched, the bird was nearly the same size as a Ring-billed Gull. The head, neck, and underparts were white, except for some gray-brown color on the nape that created a faint hood (similar to that of an adult Laughing Gull in basic plumage). The legs were lemon yellow. The mantle was very dark gray, much darker than the mantle of a Ring-billed Gull and very similar to what I would expect for an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. The folded primaries were black (darker than the mantle) and the tips appeared to lack prominent white marks. In flight, the bird was very distinctive and easy to follow. I noted that the upperwings were two-toned with black primaries that contrasted with dark gray secondaries, primary and secondary coverts, and mantle. I again noted that the primaries lacked obvious white marks, although on at least one occasion I thought I could discern a faint white mark on the outer primary tip. The trailing edge to the wing was white and did

Figure 2. Black-tailed Gull chasing Ring-billed Gull, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk*, 25 November 2007. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*

not appear particularly wide. The underwings were two-toned and the pattern reminded me of that of a muted adult Little Gull. The underwing coverts were white while the undersides of the flight feathers were noticeably darker, becoming black on the underside of the primaries. The rump and uppertail were white except for a wide, black subterminal band to the white-tipped tail. The outer rectrices were also white. In flight the bird was slower and more buoyant than a Ring-billed Gull and spent much of its time gliding without flapping. The bird landed on the water several times and I was finally able to discern the bill pattern. The bill was shaped much like that of a California Gull—long and straight without a pronounced gonys. The bill was yellow with a broad black subterminal band. Because of the distance I was unable to see any red color on the bill, if it was even present. Eye color was not noted. On the basis of head color, bill color, and pattern of the upperwings and tail, I aged the bird as an adult Black-tailed Gull in basic plumage.

I returned to Saylorville the next two days (18–19 November) and was able to relocate the bird both days in the vicinity of the marina and Sandpiper Beach. On both days I observed the bird at very close range (less than 10 m on the 18th) and noted additional features not seen during my initial observation on the 17th. The basal two thirds of the bill was dull yellow with a broad subterminal black band and a red tip. The eye was yellow with a black iris. The bird had narrow white eye crescents, most obvious on the upper lid. The head was white with remnants of a gray-brown hood, a faint necklace of brown streaks, and a white forehead, crown, and chin. The white trailing edge to the wing was widest on the secondaries, narrow on the inner primaries, and then faded to small white tips to the outer primaries. The outer primary (p10) had two tiny white subterminal mirrors. From underneath, the tail border was completely white (estimated width was 1 cm on the sides and tip) and contrasted with the black tail band. The bird appeared to be in fresh basic plumage with no evidence of flight feather molt.

This represents the first record of a Black-tailed Gull in Iowa and one of very few records of this species from the Lower 48 states. It remained at Saylorville Reservoir through 6 December 2007, was seen by hundreds of birders from across the United States, and was arguably the most viewed bird ever reported in Iowa. In North America this species occurs most regularly in Alaska and along the Atlantic Coast. There is a precedent for its occurrence in the Midwest with records from Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, all perhaps pertaining to the same individual.

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Fork-tailed Flycatcher: First Iowa Record

Mary Ann Gregory and Ann Johnson

Gray clouds hung low and light rain drizzled on the windshield. My husband wanted me to go with him on an errand, so there I was, zipping down Tama County Highway V18 on November 20. It was one o'clock in the afternoon and I hadn't even had time to read the daily newspaper, so I was scanning it as we drove south at 55 mph. Corn and soybean fields had been harvested, leaving mice and voles with less cover. My best hope was to see a hawk, if I was able to see anything at all.

Suddenly, in a serendipitous millisecond, I glanced out the window and spied an unbelievable bird on an iron fence post. It couldn't be! I grasped my husband's arm and made guttural sounds. I couldn't speak! My husband knew it must be a heart attack or a good bird, so he slowed to a stop. "Go back!" I shrieked. There on the fence was a Fork-tailed Flycatcher (see back cover)! White underneath, the head and back and tail were black. I had seen this species two months ago in Panama. It shouldn't be here! The forked-streamer tail was much longer than the length of the bird's body. As we watched in awe, the flycatcher flew north, fence post to fence post. It then flew to the east end of a grove at the intersection with 240th Street. I needed to document the find. We drove to a friend's home nearby, borrowed a camera, and returned to the site. It took ten minutes to relocate the bird. When I got my Bausch and Lomb 8 x 42 binocular on the bird again, I noticed a few small brown feathers on the front of the forehead. There was a gold spot above the brown. The right side of the forked-tail was missing some feathers. I was able to snap a few photos as the bird worked the edge of the grove. As soon as I got home I looked in my bird books to assure myself that I had indeed seen a Fork-tailed Flycatcher. I immediately posted the sighting on the IA-Bird listserv. The next morning at sunrise, 7:05 A.M., 21 November, I arrived at the site. Two other birders, Mark Proescholdt and Chris Caster, joined me. Sitting in my husband's Ford truck we watched from the top of small rise in the road, which offered a good vista of the area. At 8:19 A.M. the Fork-tailed Flycatcher flew from the south side of the road, where huge bales are located, and where I had first seen the bird on 20 November. It flew across the road to the north side, and flitted among the branches over the ditch. It was there for about ten minutes, and then flew deeper into the grove. Many other birders arrived after 8:30 A.M., but no one else saw the species that day. The wind had shifted to the northwest and temperatures dropped. Snow began falling and everyone worried that the flycatcher would succumb overnight. Fortunately a couple of lucky people ventured out on the slick roads Thanksgiving morning and found the bird, so it was still alive.

On Friday more birders arrived, many who had seen the equally rare Saylorville Black-tailed Gull earlier in the morning. At least fifty cars were lined up along 240th Street and activity started rippling down the road. Just a short distance from the grove where the bird had been previously seen, the Fork-tailed Flycatcher was actively gleaning insects around the eaves of the Tom Dvorak home. The Dvorak family, alerted by the activity on their road and by the birders staring at their house, enjoyed watching the special bird from their

upstairs windows. Their young son, Nathan, took some good photos. Tom's wife, Dorie, said that local farmers drove along the road repeatedly, just to see how many birders were there.

Just before noon, the bird left the Dvorak's home and disappeared for a short time until Jay Gilliam found it in a nearby cemetery. Again it was gleaning insects from the roof of a shed. While some stayed with the bird, others drove the roads to alert other birders that the flycatcher had again been located. At about 3:10 P.M., Jim Durbin observed the bird in the cemetery and watched it fly off to the northwest. Despite continued searching, he was apparently the last person to see it.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher, ***Tyrannus savana***, has four recognized subspecies. Two are resident in specific areas of South America. The more northerly of the four, ***monachus***, breeds from southern Mexico to north-central Brazil and migrates to the south in winter. The nominate subspecies, ***savana***, is the most migratory of the four, wintering in northern South America and breeding as far south as the southern tip Argentina (McCaskie 1994).

With all of the great photographs taken of this bird, identification to subspecies was fairly straightforward. ***Tyrannus savana savana*** is identified by the extreme emargination of the outer three primaries (Mark Robbins, pers. comm.). This is also the subspecies most likely to be seen in the United States when individual birds, particularly young birds, get their compasses rotated 180 degrees and head the wrong direction as they begin their migration journey. One couldn't help wondering if this bird was thinking the Argentinean pampas was pretty cold for a spring day. The age and sex of the bird were a bit more problematic. Although most field guides indicate that young birds have shorter tails, this is only true before the first molt and because this bird was into its breeding season, that characteristic was not helpful. Young birds retain brown or cinnamon fringes on their wing coverts and have a black cap without shine. Many photos indicate these characteristics to be the case. The only indication of sex was a comment from Robbins, "The bird is a male based on the emargination of the outer primaries."

Most records of Fork-tailed Flycatcher in the United States are from the East Coast, but records from the Upper Midwest are found in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. The Iowa bird capped off an exciting Thanksgiving week for many birders in Iowa and beyond.

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Cave Swallow at Saylorville Reservoir: First Iowa Record

Stephen J. Dinsmore

I was walking the Oak Grove Recreation Area lakeshore at Saylorville Reservoir on 26 October 2007 when I noticed a few Tree Swallows flying toward me from the north. Within a couple of minutes there were hundreds of swallows feeding off the south end of the beach and over the parking lot. I carefully scanned as many as I could and at 8:33 A.M. found an orange-rumped *Petrochelidron* swallow that I identified as a Cave Swallow.

I was fortunate to be able to study the bird in flight for the next six minutes at which time it disappeared. The small size and behavior identified the bird as a swallow and it was slimmer and shorter-winged than the Tree Swallows with which it was associating. The bird spent its time soaring above most of the Tree Swallows, dipping close to the water surface occasionally and on one occasion joining other swallows to chase a wind-blown white feather. I only observed the bird in flight, most of the time with binoculars (I briefly viewed it through my spotting scope before it disappeared), so I was unable to study the bird in great detail. The mantle, upperwings, and tail were dark-colored (appeared black or very dark brown) and contrasted with a pale orange-buff rump. The tail was square-tipped and not shallowly notched like the Tree Swallows. The bird also had a dark cap that contrasted with a narrow pale collar and pale forehead, both of which appeared to be the same color as the rump. The dark cap was restricted to the area above and posterior to the eye and was separated from the orange-buff auriculars by a sharp dividing line. The throat, upper breast, and flanks were also a pale orange-buff color and contrasted slightly with the white lower belly and vent. The tiny bill appeared dark-colored although it was impossible to see this feature clearly. The legs were not seen. The bird did not vocalize. The bird lacked the bright forehead patch and contrasting orange throat of an adult, and the evenness of the orange-buff color on various body regions indicated the bird was a juvenile Cave Swallow. The overall paleness of the bird suggests that it was of the Mexican rather than Caribbean subspecies, although I cannot be certain.

This represents the first record of a Cave Swallow for Iowa and comes at a time when records from surrounding states are on the increase. I located records for Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin from the last five years. Most occur in late fall (late October and November) after the passage of strong low pressure systems originating in the Southwest.

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Yellow-billed Loon at Saylorville Reservoir

Stephen J. Dinsmore

Figure 1. Yellow-billed Loon, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk, *28 November 2007. Photograph by Aaron Brees, Des Moines, IA.*

I was scanning Saylorville Reservoir from Cherry Glen Recreation Area on 28 November 2007 when I noticed two loons sleeping in the middle of the lake off the lower parking lot. In my initial look I thought one bird looked larger and browner and decided to study the birds more carefully. I drove to the west edge of the lower parking lot and soon both of the birds began preening and feeding. After several minutes of study I concluded that the bird of interest was a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon (Figure 1).

The bird was noticeably larger than the Common Loon with a distinctly bigger-headed and thicker-necked appearance. I estimated the bird was at least 10% larger by body size. The massive bill was pale-colored with a distinctly dull yellow base and some pale color extending anteriorly along the lower mandible. The bill was thick-based and had a sharply angled culmen, giving it an upturned appearance. This was further accentuated because the bird held its head tilted upwards at a low angle, which I estimated to be 10–15 degrees from the water surface. The forehead, crown, and back of the neck were dull brown. The face was off-white and contrasted with the dark eyes. The head shape was distinctive with a steep forehead and relatively flat crown that gave the bird the appearance of having bumps on its forehead and rear crown. The throat and foreneck were also off-white, although when viewed head-on the bird showed a dull brownish band across the chin and a second, darker, and much more distinct band across the lower neck that was broken in the middle. The chest at the waterline was white. The mantle was dark brown with distinct lateral pale barring, giving the bird a ladder-backed appearance. The bird raised itself out of the water and flapped its wings several times, allowing me to see the white belly, black flight feathers (primaries and secondaries), and pale spotting on the tertials and possibly inner secondaries. On the basis of bill color and the pattern of the head, neck, and mantle, I concluded the bird was a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon.

This represents the third record of a Yellow-billed Loon in Iowa. The previous two records were singles on 18 April 1999 at Clear Lake (Kent 1999; Kent 2000) and 1–12 December 1999 at Little Wall Lake, ***Hamilton*** (Healy, K. and H. Zaletel 2000; Kent 2000); the bird later moved to Ada Hayden Park, ***Story***, where it was present 13–21 December.

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Wood Stork at Saylorville Reservoir

Aaron Brees

On the morning of 3 October 2007, I stopped by Jester Park which lies at the upper end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. Each fall, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lowers the Saylorville pool level, creating a series of islands and mudflats off Jester Park. This results in excellent habitat for migrating pelicans, waterfowl, herons, and shorebirds, arguably making it the finest fall birding location in the state.

In the fall of 2007, central Iowa received a number of heavy rains that caused the water level to rise and flood the vegetated islands and submerge most of the mudflats. This greatly reduced the number of shorebirds using the area; however, the shallow flooded vegetation still attracted herons, egrets, and ducks.

I began scoping from Campground 4, which provides an excellent vantage point of the area. After spending a good amount of time searching for distant shorebirds and counting ducks, I decided to make a count of the Great Egrets, which were congregated at the far upper end of the flooded islands. As I scanned from one white bird to another, I came across one with obvious black in its folded wings. This bird was tucked up sleeping, but almost immediately awoke and raised an unfeathered gray head with a huge grayish bill. At that point, it was obvious that I was looking at a Wood Stork (Figure 1).

As the bird woke up, it spread its wings fully open and slowly pirouetted as if searching for the best angle to sun itself. It then stood spread eagle for many minutes, occasionally flapping its wings and bouncing up and down as if preparing to fly. However, after warming and loosening up, the bird abruptly tucked its head and went back to sleep for the next several hours. Fortunately, the bird remained until 6 October, allowing for some great photo opportunities and the observations that follow.

The stork was larger, and especially bulkier, than nearby Great Egrets. Its plumage was white, except for the primaries, secondaries, and its short tail, which were black. The head

was large, unfeathered, and dark gray in color, and the eye was dark. The bill was long and massive with a slight droop at the tip. The bill coloration was grayish at the basal end, becoming a dull horn yellow color toward the tip. The long, thin legs appeared to be a dull greenish-yellow color and extended far beyond the tail tip when in flight. The bird flew with its neck and head held straight in front of it like a crane and unlike an egret. It was seen to soar in circles on its long, broad wings, at one time rising on a thermal to a great height, before gliding off out of sight. Although initially found sleeping on the flooded river island, the stork spent its nights in the large dead trees of a ravine upstream from Campground 4. It was found feeding in a shallow pond in this ravine and would also apparently travel upriver to feed, as it was seen flying back down the valley to Jester in the evening after being worryingly absent for many hours. When feeding on the flooded islands off Jester, the stork displayed a feeding behavior typical of this species; it would partially submerge its bill in the water and then slowly walk though the flooded vegetation with its bill open. Upon making contact with a fish, the bill would instantly snap shut like a mousetrap.

Figure 1. Wood Stork, Jester Park, Polk*, 6 October 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

This Wood Stork provides a long expected second state record for Iowa. The first record was a single-observer sight-record from Louisa County on 25 September 1977 (Kent and Dinsmore 1996). Wood Storks regularly wander north into the Midwest in very small numbers. The origin of these birds is thought by some to be Mexico, although there is no way to visually distinguish them from those that breed in the southeastern United States. This bird, like most wanderers to the interior, was a young bird and probably a juvenile. This could be told from the white feathers on the neck which extended all the way up to the back of the head, whereas adult Wood Storks have unfeathered gray necks.

During the Wood Stork's stay at Jester, it attracted considerable attention from birders. This lead to an example of the famous "Patagonia Rest Stop Effect" in action, when Pam Allen looked up from stork watching and found a Black Vulture soaring overhead. Amazingly, these two exceptional vagrants were only the beginning of what was surely the most amazing fall vagrant season in recent memory.

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Long-tailed Jaeger at Saylorville Reservoir

Stephen J. Dinsmore

I arrived at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area on the east side of Saylorville Reservoir at approximately 9 A.M. on 11 September 2007. I quickly noticed that the lower end of the lake was largely devoid of gulls. This was odd because there were hundreds of gulls off Sandpiper Beach and normally there are similar numbers off the dam. I scanned the lake several times, hoping I would find a jaeger harassing the gulls. Not finding one, I continued to the dam and scanned again from the west overlook. I had been there almost 10 minutes when I spotted a darker gull-like bird soaring high over the middle of the lake. It took a few seconds for me to discern the white markings in the wings that definitively identified the bird as a jaeger.

The bird circled the lake several times, but did not harass any gulls. After a while it landed on the water and spent a half hour slowly drifting south towards the dam. The bird then made several short flights, circled high a couple of times, and eventually disappeared. Its flight style was typical of other Long-tailed Jaegers I have observed—very tern-like and buoyant with frequent dips to the water surface to search for food. Size was difficult to judge because the bird was mostly solitary. However, it circled with Ring-billed Gulls on one occasion and I noted that its body was noticeably smaller and slimmer (more attenuated) and it had a shorter wingspan and narrower wings. The bird was a distinct cold gray-brown color and lacked any hint of brighter rufous coloration. The bill was very short, stubby, and appeared dark at a distance. I judged that the bill length was at most equal to the distance from the base to the eye (i.e., it was very short!). The head and crown were dark-colored with a very distinct pale nape that appeared almost white at some angles. The bird had a rounded head shape with a steep forehead. The body, mantle, and upperwings appeared cold gray/brown at a distance, except that the mantle and upperwing coverts were prominently marked with fine pale spots and barring. When perched, the folded primaries were black and contrasted with the slightly paler gray/brown upperparts. I carefully studied the pattern of the primaries in flight and noted that the outer two (and possibly three) primary shafts were white. There was no other white color on the upperwing. The underwing had a dark background with a large pale (white) area formed by the pale bases to the primaries. The tail was dark with slightly paler uppertail coverts that were lightly barred. The central rectrices were obviously elongated, but I could not discern the shape at the tips. In flight, the bird's center of gravity appeared forward with a short front end and long, attenuated rear accentuated by the long tail and elongated central rectrices. On the basis of the pale markings on the upperparts, general coloration, and wing pattern, I aged the bird as a juvenile. Furthermore, the combination of a dark body plumage with a distinct pale nape hinted that the bird was an intermediate color morph.

This represents the third record of a Long-tailed Jaeger in Iowa. The previous two records of an adult were collected on 15 June 1907 near Lone Tree ***Johnson*** (Anderson 1908) and an adult from 4–13 September 1994 at Tomahawk M. and Black Hawk L. ***Sac*** (Ernzen

1996). Given recent numerous reports from surrounding states, it is surprising this species has been recorded in the state only twice in the last 20 years.

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Magnificent Frigatebird at Spirit Lake

Stephen J. Dinsmore and Jay Gilliam

We arrived at Spirit Lake shortly after dawn on 2 September 2007 and began birding at the south end of the lake. After a couple of quick stops we arrived at Marble Beach along the west shore of the lake at approximately 8 A.M. At 8:05 A.M. SJD spotted a distant soaring bird that initially resembled an Osprey. The bird was >2 km away, but when it finally turned sideways he was able to see the wing shape and long tail and immediately recognized the bird as a frigatebird. Both of us studied the bird for a few minutes before driving to Mini-Wakan State Park for a closer look.

Adult female Magnificent Frigatebird seen near "The Grade" at the north end of Spirit Lake, Dickinson*, 2 September 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

We arrived at Mini-Wakan State Park at approximately 8:30 A.M. and soon relocated the bird soaring over the park and adjacent shoreline. Here, we had extended looks at the bird from close range (<25 m) and took many photographs before we departed at 10:10 A.M. Winds were strong from the south and the bird spent most of its time along the north shore of the lake to the east of the park, although it also made sorties south toward the center of the lake and to the north into Minnesota. The bird was immediately recognizable as a frigatebird because of its large size; long, forked tail; and long, narrow wings with a distinct "crook" at the bend. From beneath, the flight silhouette was distinctive—long, skinny wings with a noticeable forward extension at the bend (forming a "crook"); wingtips swept backwards; long,

folded tail; and a small head with a long bill extending forward beyond the wings. We estimated that the bird's wingspan was ~2.5 times that of a Ring-billed Gull. The bill was long, straight, appeared pale gray with a hint of yellow, and had a distinct hook at the tip. The head was solid black and separated from the white breast by a sharp line of demarcation. The breast was white with wavy white lines extending onto the dark axillars. From below, the line of demarcation between the white breast and black belly was U-shaped with the open end of the U towards the tail. The remainder of the underparts was black. The mantle and upperwings were also black except that pale tips to the secondary coverts created a narrow pale line extending from the posterior base of the wing to the forward bend in the wing. The rectrices were black and the outer rectrices extended >1 foot beyond the central rectrices. The bird's left outer rectrix was broken and an estimated 3–4 inches shorter than the right outer rectrix. The legs appeared very short and were always tucked closely against the bird's body. The feet and lower legs were pale pink. On the basis of plumage characteristics, we concluded this was an adult female Magnificent Frigatebird.

We spent most of the observation period trying to age, sex, and identify the bird, knowing that frigatebird identification is sometimes challenging. However, this bird was pretty easy to identify. The combination of large size, pattern of white on the breast, dark face, wavy white lines extending onto the axillars, and bill and foot color safely eliminates all other frigatebirds, especially great and lesser (the only other two species we consider remotely possible in Iowa; see Harrison 1987). This represents the sixth accepted record of a Magnificent Frigatebird in Iowa. Previous records were all of single birds: an immature female in August 1903 near Burlington, ***Des Moines*** (Bartsch 1922), an adult female 25–26 September 1988 at Clear L., ***Cerro Gordo*** (Kent 1989), an adult female on 2 October 1988 followed by an adult male on 3 October 1988 at Red Rock Res., ***Marion*** (Kent 1989), and an adult female 4–5 September 2005 at Coralville Res., ***Johnson*** (Lowder 2006). All but the first record involved birds that were displaced inland by tropical cyclones. It is interesting to speculate how a frigatebird could have arrived in northwest Iowa. The only tropical system prior to the sighting that might have driven a frigatebird inland was Tropical Storm Erin, which developed in the western Gulf of Mexico on 14 August, made landfall in Texas on 16 August, and gradually drifted northward before dissipating on 19 August in northeastern Oklahoma. It wasn't until more than a week later that frigatebirds were noted in the region: two in eastern Nebraska, one in southeastern South Dakota, the Iowa bird, and finally one in eastern Kansas.

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Tricolored Heron in Page County

Keith Dyche

On 2 August 2007, I went to mail a letter and decided to drive by the sandpits near Rapp Park north of Shenandoah to see what shorebirds might be in the area. When I arrived at the pits, I found two American Avocets and a Forster's Tern on the east shore of the main pit.

There was someone parked in the driveway where I usually park, so I drove to the north end of Rapp Park to turn around. When I glanced into the pit on the west side of the road (it was being pumped out to remove sand at the time), I saw the head of what I thought was a small heron.

Tricolored Heron, Page*, 4 August 2007. Photograph by Reid Allen, West Des Moines, IA.*

I pulled over, but the bird had moved out of sight. I got out of the car, anticipating the sight of a Little Blue Heron, but when I looked into the pit I noticed the white stomach and blue neck of what I then realized was a Tricolored Heron, identical to those I had seen in on a trip to southern Texas late last winter.

The viewing conditions were less than ideal with the sun shining directly into my eyes. I went to get my spotting scope and to check my field guide, then shot a number of photos of the bird actively feeding along the shore. Unfortunately, the photos lacked the bird's distinctive colors. When the bird flew to the south side of the pit I was able to get a photo that showed more color and distinguishing marks. I called Marie Tiemann and she drove out to join me at the pits. As soon as she arrived, the bird flushed and the white underwing coverts and belly were again visible. The bird disappeared to Rapp Park and we could not relocate it that evening.

I saw the bird again at noon the following day and in the evening; it was feeding at the newly pumped-out pit.

On Saturday and Sunday, several birders from across the state came to view the Tricolored Heron. It was last seen on Sunday, 5 August at 7:45 P.M., being mobbed by a flock of blackbirds. The next day sand was being removed from the sandpit and the bird has not been seen since then.

This is the fifth sighting of a Tricolored Heron in Iowa, with three of those being in southwestern Iowa.

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Black Vulture above Jester Park, Polk County

Pam Allen

On 3 October 2007 at about 4:20 P.M., a group of us were observing the Wood Stork found earlier in the day at Saylorville Reservoir by Aaron Brees. I turned around and was looking up in the sky and saw a small kettle of Turkey Vultures soaring. Among the Turkey Vultures was a distinctly marked Black Vulture flying with the group. I called out "Black Vulture" and birders immediately headed over to where I was standing, and I was lucky enough to get many of those present on the bird. The Black Vulture stood out with its square, plank-shaped flight and light white primaries, visible both when seen from below as well as when viewed from on top, which contrasted with the otherwise all black body. The Black Vulture was visible for about five minutes until it disappeared from sight. Those viewing the bird at the same time were Reid Allen, Danny Akers, Chuck Fuller, John Rutenbeck, Paul Roisen, John Bissell, and Jane Clark.

Black Vulture, Jester Park, Polk*, 3 October 2007. Photograph by Reid Allen, West Des Moines, IA.*

The next morning the Black Vulture was seen roosting near Campground No. 4 and eventually took flight and could not be relocated later.

Reid and I have been saying that one of these days we'd see a Black Vulture in Iowa, and, this just happened to be our day!

This Black Vulture represents the sixth Iowa record and first for Polk County. The previous records were (1) 17 September 1933, Dallas Co. (University of Iowa specimen, Dill 1933; (2) 29 August 1959, Winnebago Co., shot but not preserved (Burgess 1959); (3) 22 September 2002, Hitchcock N.A., Pottawattamie Co. (02-24, ***IBL*** 73:6); (4) 20 August 2005, Hitchcock NC, Pottawattamie Co. (2005-46, ***IBL*** 76:17.22 [Orsag 2006]; and (5) 21 November at Hazelton, Buchanan Co. (2005-62, P-1068, ***IBL***, 76:17, 22 [Cabell 2006].

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Birding Decatur County

Jeff Livingston

Beautiful Decatur County is located in the middle of the southern edge of Iowa and has a wide variety of habitat for birds. There are rolling hills of grassland and woodlands as well as many ponds and lakes. Even in the brush alongside the roads, one can find many different species of birds.

A large percentage of Decatur Country is grassland or pasture and this provides nesting habitat for a number of species that are declining in other parts of Iowa. A leisurely drive in the county can produce sightings such as Bobolink, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite, Sedge Wren, Northern Mockingbird, and Dickcissel.

There are several large tracts of woodland that provide nesting habitat for woodland species as well as stopover spots for migrating species. Some of these are privately owned, but many are parks or wildlife management areas. Some of the nesting species highlights are Summer and Scarlet Tanager, Kentucky Warbler, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush.

In the brush along the roadsides and in brushy pastures one can find Bell's Vireo, Loggerhead Shrike, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

The easiest places to start looking for birds in Decatur County are in the parks.

Nine Eagles State Park (Figures 1.1 and 2) is listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA). This 1,100 acre park has a small lake and rugged woodlands. There are 15 miles of trails that provide easy access from the roads. We usually park near the swimming area and walk the trails around the lake. The north and east sides of the lake are the best places to find nesting Wood Thrushes and Kentucky Warblers. Black-billed Cuckoos have also been seen here.

Another place to park is a quarter mile west of the main entrance. This picnic area near the lake has provided many species, such as Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Northern Parula, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Pileated Woodpecker. Some years we have found Worm-eating Warbler on the east side of the dam along the trails.

Louisiana Waterthrush can be found along the creeks flowing into the lake in the spring. The upland woods of the park attract many species of warblers during migration. Walking the many trails will provide a workout as some of them are quite steep, but many birds also can be seen from a vehicle along the roadsides.

Dekalb (Figure 1.2) and **Sand Creek** (Figure 1.3) **Wildlife Management Areas** (located in the northwest corner of the county) are more rugged and harder to access, but are also good places to find birds. The wildlife management practices provide good winter cover and food sources. The extensive woodland habitat of Sand Creek should provide a lot of different woodland nesting species during the breeding season. Both of these areas provide lowland, creek-bottom woodlands that attract migrating passerines. While some

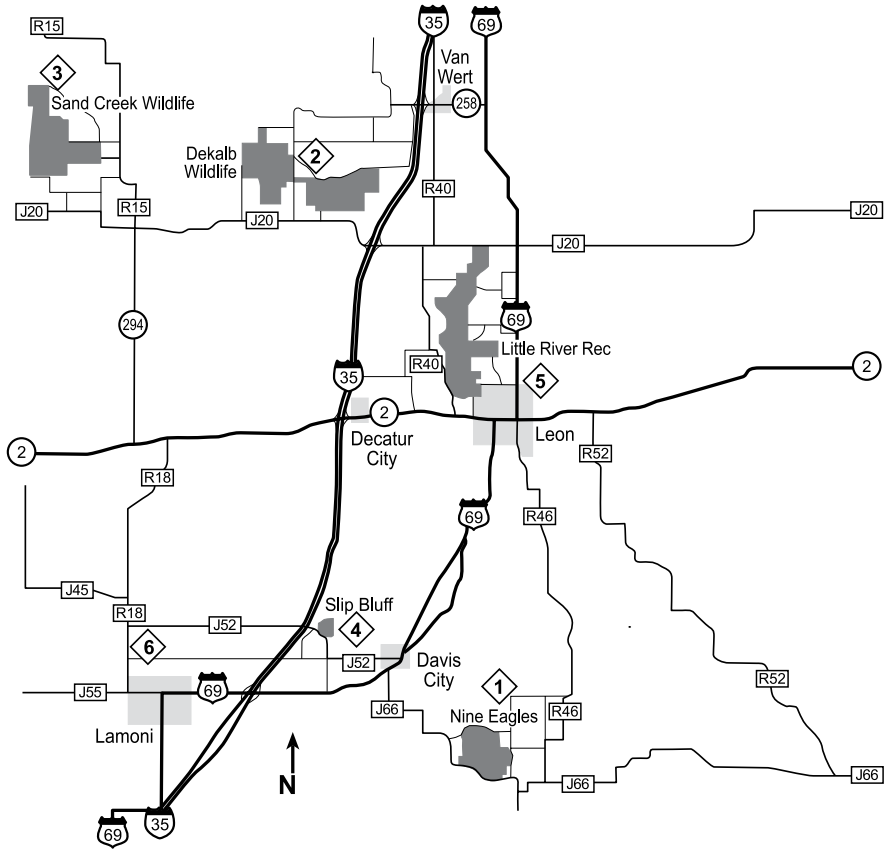

Figure 1. Birding areas in Decatur County: (1) Nine Eagles State Park, (2) Dekalb Wildlife Management Area, (3) Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area, (4) Slip Bluff, (5) Little River Recreation Area, (6) Home Pond and Lake LaShane.

areas of Dekalb can be viewed from your vehicle, Sand Creek requires mostly walking. There are some trails through the woods that can be walked, but they can be steep and rugged in places. Bell's Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chat have been found just inside the gate at Sand Creek.

Another park to visit is **Slip Bluff** (Figure 1.4). This is a county park and is not very well known. This park also has a small lake and is located in the middle of the county along the Thompson fork of the Grand River. There are a few trails and the woods are a great place to bird during migration. A drive through the campgrounds among the mature oaks can reveal a good assortment of warblers during migration.

Little River Recreation Area (Figure 1.5) (just west of Leon) has the largest lake in the county and attracts large numbers of migrating waterfowl. The best place to view the lake is from the west side of the dam on Lakeview Road. This is a high spot and, with a

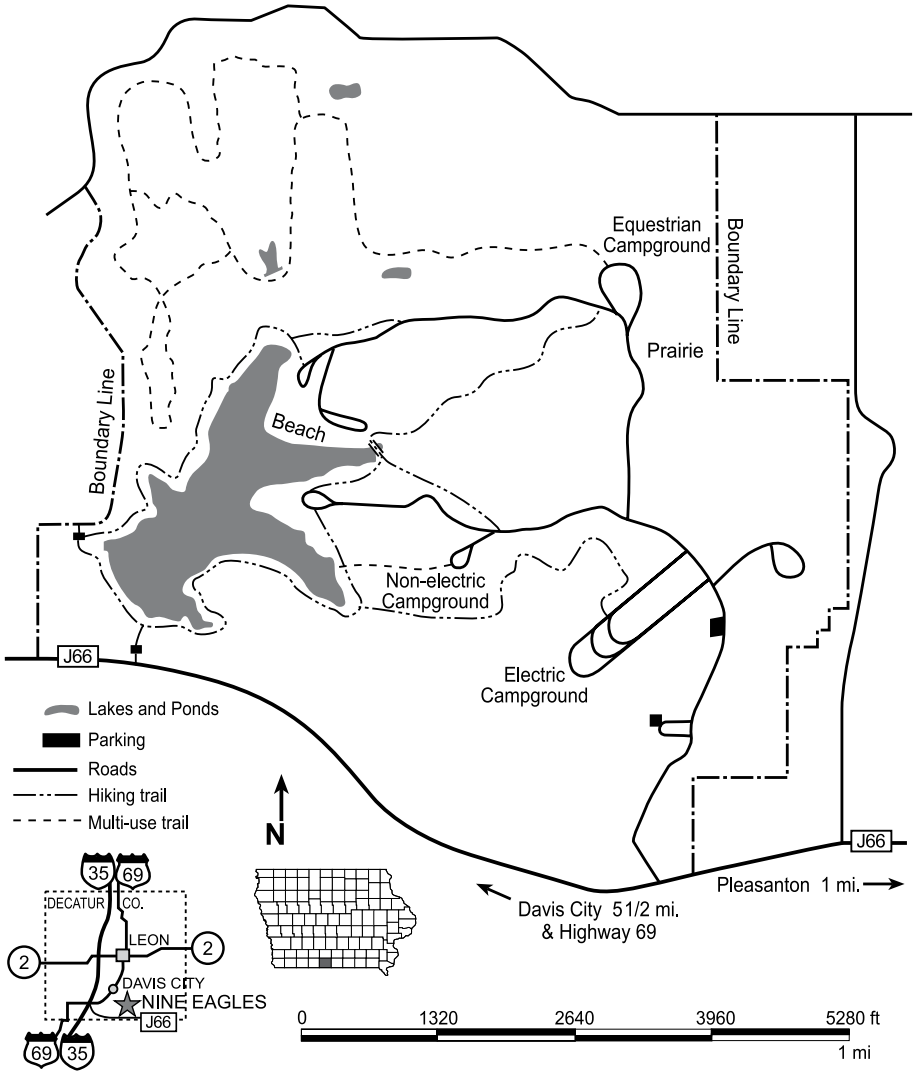

Figure 2. Nine Eagles State Park

good scope, you can see most of the lake. Another place to view the lake is near the campground on 190th Street on the east side of the lake.

A third place to view the lake is at the north end on 170th Street. This spot is harder to get to because you have to go around the lake, but it is worth the trip most of the time. Here you may see birds that are not seen on the other parts of the lake. During migration, thousands of swallows of every type gather here. It is also a good place to find rails and herons. During the summer, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo, Orchard Oriole, and Field

Sparrow can be heard calling along the roads in this area as well. The grasslands along the lake have many sparrows during migration.

There are numerous places along the shoreline that have cedar trees and brush, which provide good habitat in the winter for owls and other winter birds. The drawback about these places is that there are no trails; one has to blaze their own way through the tangles.

There is one good trail that is paved and very easy to walk, which has a lot of different habitat types. This is located across from the water treatment plant on the east side of the lake on Little River Lake Road. There are numerous evergreens and berry bushes along this trail that provide winter shelter and food for birds. This is the best place to find American Robins in the winter.

Our two favorite places to bird in Decatur County are **Home Pond** and **Lake LaShane** (Figure 1.6), both owned by the city of Lamoni. During waterfowl migration, we find that the smaller ponds and lakes melt their ice first, attracting more birds. We have a route that we travel that takes in a lot of these small lakes and ponds. We usually start at Home Pond. This is located at the water treatment plant on the west side of Lamoni. Take Mulberry Street north off of Main Street. It ends at Home Pond. Nearly the whole pond can be viewed from your vehicle, or it can be walked around. We have found a wide variety of waterfowl here, including Common Loon and all three mergansers. In dry years, Home Pond can be excellent for shorebirds. LeConte's Sparrows have been found on the northeast side of the pond as well, but this will involve a little bit of walking.

Next, we move on to Lake LaShane (Figure 1.6), located just west of Elk Chapel Road on 280th Street. The north end is the easiest to access. Here, 280th Street cuts across dividing the lake. Most of the lake can be seen from this road. The north side is shallow and marshy and attracts large numbers of puddle ducks while the south side is deeper and attracts the diving ducks. On a dry year, this north side can be all mud flats and provides a good stopover for shorebirds.

There is a small parking area on the north side of the road, and a trail on the south side, that goes through some pine trees and follows along the lakeside. The other end of the lake can be viewed along this trail. We do not go on this trail during duck hunting season because there are several blinds along this trail that are usually in use. We find Long-eared Owls and Red-breasted Nuthatches in the pine trees every year. This trail is also a very good place to find migrating warblers, thrushes, and sparrows. There was even a Barn Owl found where this trail and the road meet. Walking from the parking area north along the shoreline is a very productive spot for sparrows, warblers, and migrating flycatchers.

From Lake LaShane, we go back towards Lamoni and check out some small farm ponds. These must be viewed from the road as they are private property. The first we call Goldeneye Pond, because this is where we have seen both Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes; then we check what we have named Canvasback Pond (for obvious reasons also). These ponds usually get good results when the bigger lakes fail us.

A drive through the Decatur County countryside almost anywhere, in any season, will provide glimpses of a wide variety of species. Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Kestrel are seen regularly in the winter along the roads, especially in the western part of the county.

With its wide variety of habitat, Decatur County provides many birding opportunities.

Many of these do not require a lot of walking, but there are also plenty of places to satisfy those birders who like to trek through the bush.

If you are in the area, or want to make a special trip, birding Decatur County on Iowa's southern edge will seldom disappoint you.

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In Memoriam: Virginia R. Crocker, 5 December 1913–11 November 2007

Larry A. Stone

Virginia Crocker thrived on birds and books. "That was her whole life," said Virginia's long time caregiver, Joann Samsel.

Virginia died 11 November 2007, at Buena Vista Manor, in Storm Lake where she had lived since 2001. Many Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU) members and other conservationists will remember her and her husband, Ed, who died in 1987, as tireless advocates for birds, the environment, and education (Figure 1).

That commitment will continue even after the Crockers' deaths, in the form of a $5,000 bequest that Virginia made to the IOU.

People who knew the Crockers probably were not surprised at the generous gift. The couple supported a broad cross-section of conservation groups, and had contributed to the college funds of a number of young friends and acquaintances.

Their modest home was crammed with blooming plants and nature books, and the walls were lined with wildlife art. Boxes of carousel trays filled with Ed's slides lined the shelves—ready at a moment's notice for the couple to give a conservation program for a school, service club, or conservation group.

Chairs, end tables, the floor—even Virginia's cherished grand piano—were piled with books. "Every place I sit, I have something to read," Virginia once joked to a visitor.

Her love of nature and books came partly from her father, a Snow Hill, Md. country doctor, who found time to teach his daughter about the natural world. He also brought her books whenever he returned from a trip to a medical meeting in Baltimore.

A 1935 graduate of Wellesley College, Virginia was teaching high school chemistry in Maryland when she met Ed in 1936. Ed taught vocational agriculture and later worked for the U.S. Soil Conservation service. They were married in 1942. (Virginia later confided to college friends that it was the happiest day of her life.)

During World War II, Ed served more than two years in the U.S. Army in India. Virginia, meanwhile, earned her wings as a civilian spotter watching for enemy planes along Maryland's eastern shore. Years later, she could still laugh about the time she and a companion reported a squadron of enemy aircraft that turned out to be turkey vultures.

Figure 1. Virginia and Ed Crocker, 1987. Photograph by Larry A. Stone.

The couple moved to Storm Lake in 1947. "It looked pretty barren to me," Virginia recalled later. An Iowa blizzard greeted them.

But the Crockers quickly adapted to Iowa, where Ed preached the gospel of soil conservation and Virginia immersed herself in birds and gardening. The Crockers also conducted breeding bird surveys for nearly two decades. Virginia is credited with two first Iowa records: a Western Tanager at Storm Lake in 1969 and a Green-tailed Towhee at Storm Lake in 1975.

To demonstrate their belief in the compatibility between agriculture and wildlife, the couple bought a 40-acre farm near Alta. Ed and his tenant installed demonstration plots with grassed waterways, terraces, strip cropping, crop rotations, and other soil conservation measures.

The Crockers also advocated urban conservation. They described their back yard as a jungle, inviting birds to nest or feed in highbush cranberry bushes, sunflowers, or even Virginia's garden.

At Virginia's 23 November memorial service in Storm Lake, former neighbor children, now grown, recalled how Virginia sometimes scolded them for trying to catch nightcrawlers in her yard. "Leave them alone!" she admonished. "They're for the birds." Apples and walnuts were reserved for the wildlife, as well. "I don't kill spiders, either," Virginia once reminded a visitor who dared to think she was a bit overprotective. Virginia's favorite poem—"Trees" by Joyce Kilmer—was read at her memorial service.

Although Ed Crocker held several local, state, and national offices with the Izaak Walton League, both Crockers disagreed vehemently with the League's advocacy of a dove hunting season in Iowa. The couple for many years helped with an Ikes conservation camp for kids in the Storm Lake area, but they urged more emphasis on conservation and less on hunting.

Unlike another IOU legend, Gladys Black, who detested cats, Virginia Crocker loved felines. "I never met a cat I didn't like," she confided. She and Ed provided the "Crocker Cat Cafeteria" on their front porch for hungry strays or neighbors' pets.

In their later years as the Crockers were picking out their grave stones, Virginia asked for an etching of a Canada goose as a testimony to her love of birds. To the Crockers' chagrin, and great amusement, the engraver was not a birder. Her stone at the Buena Vista Memorial Park Cemetery in Storm Lake boasts an image of a duck!

(Note: Larry Stone first met Ed and Virginia Crocker in the early 1970s, when the Crockers were active in the Izaak Walton League of America, The Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and other conservation groups that Larry was covering as outdoor writer with ***The Des Moines Register***. Larry and his wife, Margaret, developed a friendship with the Crocker's that continued more than 30 years.)

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Book Review: Oology and Ralph's Talking Eggs

Hank Zaletel

Henderson, Carrol L. *Oology and Ralph's Talking Eggs: Bird Conservation Comes Out of Its Shell*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas. 177 pp. $29.95

Oology is the branch of zoology that deals with the study of eggs, especially bird's eggs.

Imagine my surprise to learn that a world-class ornithological collection was located several miles from where I formerly lived in Colo, Iowa and I had no idea that it existed.

I first became aware of the collection when my wife e-mailed me a copy of Carrol Henderson's article "Ralph's Talking Eggs" in the October 2005 issue of *Birder's World* <http://www.birdersworld.com/brd/default.aspx?c=a&id=495> (Henderson 2005). In July of 2006, I sent a message to the IOU Bird listserv alerting members to the article.

Henderson's book is an expansion of his earlier *Birder's World* article. The book describes Carrol's discovery of Ralph Handsaker's egg collection near Colo in Story County. Ralph, a farmer, taxidermist, naturalist, and egg collector, collected, purchased and traded bird eggs from the late 1890s to 1969 when he died. His house was then closed and not opened again until 2003. His collection lay undisturbed for forty years.

Carrol describes his unique discovery, the evaluation of the collection, and its eventual acquisition by the Peabody Museum at Yale University.

The second part of the book describes the world of the egg collector in the 1890–1900 time period, the birth of the avian conservation movement, scientific ornithology, and modern birdwatching.

The remaining half of the book highlights sixty species of birds common to the collection, a period illustration of each bird, a photo of the species' eggs found in the collection, and how each species fared in the last one hundred years.

And now for the title: Carrol stated "I realized that the eggs had remarkable stories to tell about the birds that had them, about the people who collected them, and about the progress in bird conservation that has occurred since the era when those eggs were collected. After many years of silence in the darkness of that abandoned farmhouse, they became Ralph's Talking Eggs."

Carrol Henderson has headed the Nongame Wildlife Program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for thirty years. He is the author of many articles and seven books, including *Field Guide to the Wildlife of Costa Rica*.

In concluding, I would recommend this volume to all serious students of Iowa bird study. For novices or those with little interest in the topic, I would recommend reading the *Birder's World* article and, then, making a decision about purchasing the volume.

NOTE: While researching background information for this book, I noted that online booksellers such as Amazon were offering discounts of 30% or more for this title.

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Henderson, Carrol. 2005. Ralph's Talking Eggs. *Birder's World* 19(5): 34–41.

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Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life*

James J. Dinsmore

White-winged Crossbill was the featured species in the March 1958 issue of ***Iowa Bird Life***. Fred Kent and William Youngworth described finding numerous White-winged Crossbills in Iowa City and in the Sioux City region respectively, during the winter of 1957–1958. Russell Hays and Myrle Jones described similar findings in Black Hawk County and the Estherville region as well, suggesting a big influx of this species. Iowa has had few reports of White-winged Crossbills in recent years with the last big invasion in 1997–1998.

In the lead article of the issue, Jim Sieh described a massive migration of waterfowl through northwestern Iowa on 24 October 1957 with the birds moving south in front of a large weather system that moved across the northern plains. A similar massive movement of waterfowl occurred on 10–11 November 1998, that time accompanied by hundreds of Sandhill Cranes.

Woodward Brown's summary of the 1957 Christmas Bird Count indicated that a total of 98 species were found, 10 more than the previous record. Species new to the count were Black-crowned Night-Heron, Glaucous Gull, and Hermit Thrush. It was a winter finch year with White-winged Crossbills found on 10 of 25 counts and Red-breasted Nuthatches on 15.

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) $15, Institutional $20, Goldfinch $20, Bluebird $35, Oriole $50, Egret $75, Osprey $100, Bald Eagle $250, and Peregrine Falcon $500+. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Join, give a gift, or manage your membership on-line at <www.iowabirds.org>. Address and e-mail changes, paper forms for new members, and renewals may be mailed to the treasurer (see inside front cover). Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available from Doug Hunt, 1201 High Ave. West, Oskaloosa, IA 52577 (iou@mahaska.org).

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS: Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word to editor. Research manuscripts should include abstract, introduction, study area, methods, results, discussion, and literature cited sections and will be sent for peer review. Accepted manuscripts will be published promptly depending on space available.

Photos and graphics: Submit only original, unsized, and unenhanced photos in your camera's JPEG (*.jpg) format. Photos must be 300 dpi at the size they will be printed (6-1/8" wide by 6-1/8" high for the cover and various smaller sizes inside), so setting your camera to its highest possible resolution is recommended. The editor will do any resizing and enhancing required because any previous adjustments to the photos may make them unusable. Submit photos and graphics as e-mail attachments.

E-mail all material other than seasonal reports to editor at Kay@KayNiyo.com. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (Vol. xx[1]), April 1 for spring issue [2], July 1 for summer issue [3], October 1 for fall issue [4]**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

BIRD SIGHTINGS: Subscribe at <www.iowabirds.org>

ADDRESS CHANGES: Update your on-line profile at <www.iowabirds.org> or send address changes to Membership Coordinator Douglas Hunt, 1201 High Ave., West, Oskaloosa, IA 52577 (iou@mahaska.org).

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: Spring 2008: 9–11 May 2008, Oskaloosa

FRONT COVER PHOTO: Black-tailed Gull, first state record, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk, 18 December 2007. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

BACK COVER PHOTO: Fork-tailed Flycatcher, first state record, Tama, 23 November 2007. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

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