

Iowa & Missouri



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For the first half of the season, it seemed that the Region experienced a freak latitudinal inversion wherein Iowa had dry, unseasonably warm weather while Missouri, especially the southern half, was buffeted by repeated blizzards. More typical weather returned during the last half of the season. Iowa experienced about average temperatures, and although there was some snow, it was one of the driest winters on record. Missouri had below-average temperatures, and, in the north, very low precipitation. Having nothing to do with our weather was the season's best bird, a Clark's Nutcracker near St. Louis. It will be interesting to see if others moved eastward, although there are preliminary indications that this was the lone ranger. Most waterfowl departed early but returned on schedule. Mimids made a very good showing in

Iowa, and there were some lingering warblers. As we have come to expect, winter finches failed to appear.

A special thanks to Brad Jacobs, my Winter Field Reports counterpart from Missouri. He was indispensable in assembling the records for this column. Thanks also to Steve Dinsmore, one of Iowa's own and now Associate Editor, for his thoughtful review. Finally, thanks to Ken Brock for his years of compiling the quarterly reports of the former Middlewestern Prairie Region. Doing this single report made me appreciate the huge amount of work he did, compiling material from six states four times a year.

Abbreviations: R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); S.L.N.W.R. (Swan Lake N.W.R., Livingston, MO).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Common Loons lingered at Rathbun Res. in Appanoose, IA 11-20 Dec (AB, RLC) and in St. Louis, MO 1 Jan (IH). There were 2 Pied-billed Grebes at Cedar L. in Cedar Rapids, IA 29 Jan—16 Feb (MCD). L. Jacomo, Jackson, MO produced two good grebes, a Red-necked 7 Dec (LL, m. ob.) and an Eared 8

Dec (RM). The 79 American White Pelicans and 16 Double-crested Cormorants at the Montrose power plant in Henry 20 Jan (MR) were new Missouri high counts for Jan. Unusual were 2 Great Egrets at the Ameren Portage Des Sioux Power Plant in St. Charles, MO 1 Feb (JE). A juv. Black-crowned Night-Heron at Cedar L. 24-25 Jan was Iowa's 5th consecutive winter record at that location (BSc). A *Plegadis* ibis at S.L.N.W.R. was reported by hunters 2 Dec (fide SK). Missouri's northernmost Black Vulture roost produced 8 Black and 150 Turkey in Ste. Genevieve 11 Jan (JE, JM, CM). Exceptional was the Turkey Vulture in Clay, n. Iowa 9 Jan (†LAS); another was on the Iowa City C.B.C.

Greater White-fronted Geese were reported in small numbers throughout the season, with migrants returning to cen. Iowa 13 Feb (MP, MCD). The largest concentrations of wintering Canada Geese were 7000 at 2 Cerro Gordo locations in n. Iowa. (PH, CJF). Accidental in the Region, a *hrota* Brant in Tama, IA 9-11 Dec marked the state's 2nd consecutive year for this species (†MP, †MCD). There were about 12 Mute Swans around the Region, with 6 unmarked birds in Lincoln, MO 1 Feb (BS) being the high count. Trumpeter Swans peaked at 52 at R.E.D.A. 8 Dec; unusual for Missouri, 2 Tundra Swans overwintered here (BR, MT). Impressive was the count of 6000 Tundra Swans at their usual Mississippi R. staging area in Allamakee, IA 1 Dec (DC). Impressive Mallard totals were 22,500 at Rathbun Res., IA 11 Dec (AB), and 50,000 each at Lincoln, MO (SK) and S.L.N.W.R. (SK). Other dabblers appeared in normal numbers. *Aythya* ducks were not well represented except for 725 Ring-necked Ducks on Pool 19 of the Mississippi R. in Lee 20 Dec and 184 Greater Scaup there 26 Dec (SJD). Iowa had 6 White-winged Scoters, the latest 26 Dec; Missouri had one at Mozingo L., Nodaway 4 Dec (DAE) and 2 imm. at L. Jacomo 8 Dec (RM). The latter locale also produced Missouri's first winter Black Scoter record away from the Mississippi R. 7 Dec (†DAE, PK). Long-tailed Duck numbers were about normal, with 10 in three Iowa locations during Dec and 2 at R.E.D.A. 1 Feb (CA). An exceptional 940 Hooded Mergansers at the Montrose Power Plant in Henry, MO 20 Jan was the highest count for the state in any season (MR). Unexpected in mid-winter was a Red-breasted Merganser in Cedar Rapids, IA 29 Jan (†MCD).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Northern Goshawks did not make it s. of I-80 in Iowa, and seven of the nine reports were from the n. three tiers of counties. Red-shouldered Hawks were reported from three Iowa and four Missouri locations, although they may not be consistently

reported in the Ozark Plateau. In addition to the usual wintering birds in *Allamakee*, IA, Golden Eagles appeared at four scattered Iowa locations, while 2 different birds were in the vicinity of S.L.N.W.R. in Feb (SK, JG). Iowa had 5 post-C.B.C. Merlins, and Missouri had one. The most easterly Prairie Falcon was one at S.L.N.W.R. 19 Feb (SK); other singles were in *Vernon*, MO 1 Dec (CB), at *Buchanan*, MO 2 Dec (LL), and in *Sioux City*, IA 6 Feb (GLV).

Reintroduced populations of Greater Prairie-Chickens seem to be holding their own along the Iowa/Missouri border: 24 at *Dunn Ranch Preserve* in *Harrison*, MO 7 Jan (SK) and 34 at *Kellerton A.* in *Ringgold*, IA in Feb (Ed White, *fide* JJD) were encouraging numbers. Reflecting a continuing decline, Northern Bobwhite was virtually unreported in Iowa, but Brad Jacobs noted that in Missouri, they seemed to be more numerous. Virginia Rails included 5 on 14 Dec and one on 20 Dec at the *Columbia*, MO W.T.P.; a *Sora* was also here 14 Dec (BG). Iowa had two midwinter American Coot reports of one or 2 birds. Sandhill Cranes were reported only from Missouri, with 7 in *St. Genevieve* 2 Feb (JE, JM) and one at the *Montrose Power Plant* 20 Jan (MR).

Wintering were 2 Killdeer and a Wilson's Snipe at the *Decorah trout hatchery* in extreme ne. Iowa (DC). Missouri posted three unusual shorebird reports: a Lesser Yellowlegs in *Laclede* through 5 Dec (LP), up to 23 Least Sandpipers the *Winfield Lock and Dam* in *Lincoln* 11 Jan, with smaller numbers remaining through the season (BS), and another Least on the *Four Rivers*, MO C.B.C.

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRD

An ad. Franklin's Gull was at *Saylorville Res.* 22-24 Dec (SJD, AB). There were 8 Bonaparte's Gulls at *Truman Res. dam*, MO 20 Jan (MR). Iowans turned up about 13 Thayer's Gulls during the season; none were reported from Missouri, but an Iceland Gull was found at R.E.D.A. 3 Feb (JE). The season's only Great Black-backed Gull, molting into second-alternate plumage, was at R.E.D.A. 23 Feb. Lesser Black-backed Gulls included an ad. in *Des Moines*, IA 15-17 Jan (†MP, †RCe, m. ob.) and 2 ads. at R.E.D.A. 1 Feb (BR). Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported from nine Iowa counties and several Missouri locations; the most by far were the 26 in *Guthrie*, IA 23 Dec (AB, JJD). Greater Roadrunners appeared in above-average numbers in their usual range in extreme sw. Missouri, with several appearing at feeders. A concerted search in n.-cen. Missouri for Barn Owls produced singles in

Livingston and *Carroll* 14 Feb (SK). There was an Arctic-race Great Horned Owl in *Grundy*, IA 1 Feb (MP). The most southerly Snowy Owl was in *Knox*, MO for several weeks (AD), and another was in *Harrison*, MO 25 Jan (SK); there were 4 others in the n. half of Iowa. Long-eared Owl made a good Iowa showing, with 10 or more in *Worth* (RG, CJF), *Iowa* (*fide* JJD), and *Plymouth* (GLV) and 4 or more were reported from six other counties. Short-eared Owl peak counts include up to 24 in *Barton*, MO 15 Feb (JC) and 11 in *Butler*, IA 1 Dec (MP, BP). Steve Kinder observed that both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls were absent from some n. Missouri roosts and in low numbers in others. Missouri had 2 Northern Saw-whet Owls, both from the n. two tiers of counties; Iowa had 10 reports of 12 birds from throughout the season and the state. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was in *Boone*, MO 9-15 Dec, the state's latest record (†, ph. TG).

WOODPECKERS THROUGH PIPITS

"Red-shafted" Northern Flickers away from the w. edge of the Region included one on the S.L.N.W.R. C.B.C. and another nearby in *Livingston*, MO 4 Nov and 16 Feb (LL, SK). Eastern Phoebe appeared in two se. and one ne. Missouri counties; of more interest was a Say's Phoebe at *Four Rivers C. A.*, *Bates*, MO 14 Dec (†, ph. MR, RM). There were 5 Loggerhead Shrikes on the *Maryville*, MO C.B.C.; Iowa singles were in *Appanoose* 8 & 15 Dec (RLC), on the *Iowa City C.B.C.*, and

remained for a few days at *Busch C.A.* in *St. Charles*, MO 21 Dec (†RK, ph. Mike Grant), representing Missouri's first report in 30 years. Horned Larks concentrations appeared only in Iowa, with 3600 in *O'Brien* 29 Jan (DK) and four other mid-Feb reports of 100 or more. Red-breasted Nuthatches pretty much stayed home; Iowa had six reports of single or 2 birds and Missouri had 2, but Brown Creepers wintered in higher-than-average numbers in both states. Two Carolina Wrens wintered at *Sioux City*, Iowa (BFH, GLV). A Bewick's Wren was in *Newton*, MO 22 Feb, a location where this species winters in small numbers (JC). Lingering in Iowa were a Marsh Wren in *Lee* 20-26 Dec (SJD) and another on the *Shenandoah C.B.C.* The most among three Missouri reports were 6 at the *Columbia W.T.P.* 14 Dec (BG); some of the other birds apparently wintered.

There were 4 Ruby-crowned Kinglets on the *Des Moines C.B.C.* and 3 other Dec reports of singles in Iowa. The Region's only Townsend's Solitaire was on the *Cherokee C.B.C.* in nw. Iowa. Iowa had 7 post-C.B.C. Hermit Thrushes from five locations, primarily in the south. Varied Thrushes were at *Guthrie*, IA 7 Dec (MP, WO), *Spirit L.*, IA 7-8 Dec (ET, LAS), and *Sioux*, IA 8 Dec—11 Jan (GLV, BFH, PE, ph. Loren Hansen); Missouri birds were at *St. Louis* 23 Jan (†MTe) and *Texas* 26-28 Jan (ph. Susan Ford). Surprising for Iowa were Gray Catbird reports from six C.B.C.s, plus one in *Iowa City* 23 Dec—26 Jan (JLF), another near *Iowa City* 23 Jan (JLF), and one in *Woodbury* 23 Feb (BFH). Iowa Northern Mockingbirds were reported on the *Carroll C.B.C.* and in *Louisa* 16 Jan (JLF). Completing Iowa's mimid sweep were Brown Thrashers 25 Dec—26 Jan at *Iowa City* (JLF), on the *Humboldt County C.B.C.*, and a wintering bird in *Mason City* (CJF). Reports of 4 Brown Thrashers also came from s. Missouri. Iowa had a single American Pipit on the *Clinton*, IA C.B.C., and the high count was a noteworthy 68 at *Four Rivers C. A.* in *Bates*, MO 14 Dec (RM).



Clark's Nutcracker had not been seen in three decades in Missouri, so this bird at *Busch Conservation Area* in *St. Charles County* 21 December 2002 was the pearl of the holiday season, without question. Photograph by Mike Grant.

wintering in *Warren* (ph. JGi, AJ). Northern Shrikes made it s. to extreme nw. Missouri, with up to 2 in *Nodaway* 4-5 Jan (KG, DAE, PK) and one in adjacent *Worth* 25 Jan (ph. RM). With the exception of 3 during the season in *Warren* (JS), all of Iowa's 15 reports were from the n. half of the state. The bird of the season was a Clark's Nutcracker that

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Warblers made a respectable showing. An Orange-crowned appeared on the *Taney*, MO C.B.C., and another was in *St. Charles*, MO 5 Jan (JE). An Audubon's Warbler was identified on the *KATY bike Trail* near *Columbia*, MO 9 Feb (MB). A Palm Warbler was on the *Mingo*, MO C.B.C. Iowa's 7th winter and record-latest Ovenbird was in *Iowa City* 17 Dec and again 15 Jan (ph. Jan McDonald, Steve Eliot). Finally, Common Yellowthroats were on the *Shenandoah*, IA C.B.C. and at

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Fountain Grove A. near Chillicothe, MO 26 Dec.

There were 7 Spotted Towhees on three Iowa C.B.C.s, all in the w. half of the state; another was in Ozark, MO 24 Dec (EF). Field Sparrows appeared on four Iowa C.B.C.s, while another was in Livingston, MO 3 Feb (SK). Savannah Sparrow numbers peaked at 79 at the Clarence Cannon, MO C.B.C., and 4 Fox Sparrows wintered at three n. Iowa locations. Unusual in mid-winter was a Lincoln's Sparrow in Warren, IA 5 Jan (†JS). White-throated Sparrows wintered in good numbers throughout Iowa; the high count by far was 27 in Iowa City 10 Feb (THK). Harris's Sparrows remained in the w. half of the Region, and a White-crowned wintered at Spirit L., IA (ET). Lapland Longspur flocks peaked at about 200 in both states, but Snow Buntings were scarce in both. Very unusual was an Indigo Bunting in Ste. Genevieve in se. Missouri 4 Jan (†JE). Brewer's Blackbird reports were all from C.B.C.s: one at Four Rivers, MO and another at Shenandoah, IA. Great-tailed Grackles in Missouri peaked at 1000 in Boone in cen. Missouri 4 Dec (NY), and up to 30 wintered in Warren, IA (AJ).

Winter finches were once again a no-show. Post-C.B.C. Purple Finch reports totaled 11 birds at three Iowa locations, and the only Common Redpoll was on the Burlington, IA C.B.C. Single Pine Siskins appeared at two Iowa locations; another was in Holt, MO (TR). Unreported were cross-bills and Evening Grosbeak; the latter has been returned to "casual" status in Iowa. In addition to their usual Iowa and Missouri locations, 6 Eurasian Tree Sparrows were along the Mississippi R. in Canton, MO 26 Jan, where they are probably regular (†RCe).

Cited observers (subregional coordinators in boldface): Connie Alwood, Mike Brady, Aaron Brees, Charles Burwick, Jeff Cantrell, Dennis Carter, Robert Cecil (RCe) (Iowa), Ray Cummings (RLC), James J. Dinsmore, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ann Downing, Joseph Eades, David A. Easterla, Bill Eddleman, Pete Ernzen, Carolyn Fischer, Evelyn Ford, Jim L. Fuller, Bill Goodge, Troy Gordon, Kirby Goslee, Jay Gilliam (JGi), Rita Goransen, John Guthrie (JGu), Paul Hertzell, Ian Hunt, Bill F. Huser, Brad Jacobs (Missouri), Ann Johnson, Thomas H. Kent, Steve Kinder, Darwin Koenig, Peter Kondrashov, Rich Kostecke, Larry Lade, Jerry Majka, Charlene Malon, Roger McNeill, Wolf Oesterreich, Lester Pannell, Beth Proescholdt, Mark Proescholdt, Mark Robbins, Tommie Rogers, Dave Rogles, Bill Rowe, Bill Scheible (BSc), Lee A. Schoenewe, Bruce Schutte (BS), Jim Sinclair, Maggie Terpstra (MTe), Ed Thelen, Mike Thelen (MT), Gerald Von Ehwegen, Neal Young. 🐦