

Iowa & Missouri

The north-south orientation of the Iowa & Missouri region stretches some 1280 km from the cypress swamps of the Missouri boot-heel to the treeless plains of northwestern Iowa. Weather patterns vary significantly across this large and diverse area, especially in spring. Missouri's peak migration of early May was characterized by strong, consistent, southerly winds that seemed to stall just north of the border—many birds whisked straight over Missouri, not needing to stop, rest, and refuel. Those migrants that did stop seemed to linger a day or so, and then were off again. Iowa's weather was more conducive for birding, birders reporting good concentrations of northbound migrants (Connecticut Warblers in particular!) during periods of adverse weather. Dramatic temperature swings were recorded in each of the spring months: Iowa reported up to 76° F differences between the high and low temperatures of this season's months. The mild drought in our Region was officially "ended" with the arrival of spring rains, and many areas went from having too little to too much water in a matter of days. Shorebirds appeared in numbers to take advantage of flooded fields in some areas.

After a relative dearth of extralimital species in recent years, spring rewarded both Iowa and Missouri birders with a host of uncommon species: Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, King Rail, Snowy Plover, Whimbrel, Townsend's Solitaire, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting were found in Iowa, with Rock Wren, Sage Thrasher, and White-tailed Kite in Missouri. Additionally, spring 2004 reports of Iceland Gull, Laughing Gull, Sprague's Pipit, Black Rail, and Black-headed Grosbeak are before the records committee in Iowa and will be reported here as addenda if approved.

Abbreviations: B.C.A. (Bird Conservation Area); B.L.S.P. (Big Lake S.P., Holt, MO); Hawkeye (W.A., Johnson, IA); R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); S.C.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., MO); T.G.P. (Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO).

LOONS THROUGH IBIS

A Red-throated Loon, always a good find in Missouri, was at Fellow's L., Springfield, Boone 4-6 Apr (JL, KM); Iowa also had a lone bird 2 May at Spirit L., Dickinson (LAS, Pete Erzen). A late Common Loon 31 May at Binder L., Cole, MO (CM JM) provided the Region's latest date. Iowa reported 5 Red-necked Grebes 3 Apr-22 May, but Missouri birders reported none. Iowa Lakes held 16 Western Grebes, while Missouri's only report came from Creve Coeur L., St. Louis 30 Apr-3 May (JE, JM). Forty Iowa American Bittern reports came in from 17 counties.



Less common in Missouri, reports came in from Creve Coeur L., from Springfield, from R.E.D.A., plus an 18 May bird at Schell-Osage C.A., St. Clair (MA). An early Cattle Egret was at S.C.R. 3 Apr (LL). Iowa's first bird came a day later, 4 Apr, at Rice L., Worth (PH). Ibis are not common anywhere in the Region; away from expected Missouri haunts were a Glossy Ibis found with 6 White-faced at S.C.R. 14 May (KM) and a White-faced Ibis at Ten Mile Pond 24 Apr (JE). TR had the season high count of 32 White-faced around the S.C.R. loop 16 May. By contrast, Iowa reported only 4 White-faced for the season.

WATERFOWL THROUGH GROUSE

Eades reported a single Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 31 May at Binder L., Cole, while a Fulvous Whistling-Duck was reported from Ten Mile Pond C.A., New Madrid, MO 4 May (SP). S.C.R. kicked off the spring reporting season with a maximum count of 1815 Greater White-fronted Geese (GS). A late flock of 32 was at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth, IA 12 May (RGo, MCK), and a lone bird was still at B.L.S.P. 15 May (RM, MR, MG). A count of 161,000 Snow Geese came

Roger D. McNeill

2520 Red Bridge Terrace

Kansas City, Missouri 64131

(Roger.D.McNeill@mail.sprint.com)

from S.C.R. 1 Mar (GS), and the last Iowa stragglers were 23 May at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth (MCK) and two days later at the Hubbard S.T.P., Hardin (Mark Proescholdt). A suburban Kansas City Snow Goose was still present 31 May (RM), possibly an injured or lead-poisoned bird. A 5 Mar flock of 100 Ross's Geese were at S.C.R. (TR). Unbanded Trumpeter Swans were noted at three Iowa locations 9 Mar-9 May (m.ob.). Over 1600 Gadwall were at Jester Park, Polk, IA 28 Mar (BE). Two Eurasian Wigeons were found by a Cedar Rapids Audubon group 27 Mar at Cone M, Louisa, IA. Both a male Cinnamon Teal and a likely hybrid Blue-winged Teal x Cinnamon Teal male were found at Eagle Bluffs 10 Mar (Bill Goodge). Iowa also had a hybrid photographed 14 Apr in Boone (RIA, PHA). Two

male Cinnamons were reported in Missouri, at S.C.R. 3 Apr (IL) and at Macon L., Macon 1 May (Kim Mar). A good count of 3900 Northern Pintails came from S.C.R. 5 Mar (TR). Iowa's high was a day later, 4200 6 Mar at Jester Park, Polk (BE).

A female **Harlequin Duck** found in Feb in Illinois was seen flying over the Iowa side of the Mississippi R., Scott and was present until at least 10 Mar (†THK, †DAK, DRo). Iowa reported the only Long-tailed Duck, a drake at New L., Woodbury 12–14 Mar (Jerry Von Ehwegen, BFH). A female Common Merganser along the Current R. below Round Spring Missouri, Shannon should have been far to the n. on 26 May (MR, BB, AN). A late raft of 20–25 Ruddy Ducks was discovered at B.L.S.P. 15 May (MR, RM, MG).

Singles and pairs of Gray Partridge were found in 14 Iowa counties in the n. two-thirds of the state, while Ruffed Grouse still hang on in scattered patches across Missouri, with three reports coming from Daniel Boone C.A., Warren (KM, MG, JU). Iowa reports 10–13 Greater Prairie-Chickens 28 Mar–10 Apr at the Kellerton B.C.A. lek, Ringgold (m.ob.), up from last year. The status of Greater Prairie-Chicken in Missouri remains grim; counts this season indicate that fewer booming males are left in the state. Birds still persist at Dunn Ranch, Taberville, St. Clair, at Hi Lonesome, Benton, and at Prairie S.P., Green Ridge, Lawrence. On the positive side, a slight gain occurred in the Stony Point Focus Area, Morgan; Iantha added a single booming bird; and a quadrupling of the Walker, Vernon population (5 birds to 20 birds) has occurred. Two displaying Sharp-tailed Grouse 12 Apr in Woodbury, IA were very close to the Dept. of Natural Resources' release site.

RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

After a long hiatus, Ospreys are now returning to breed in the Region. Bill Goodge reported an occupied nest s. of Jacksonville, Jacksonville, MO 3 Apr, and an Iowa nesting was attempted again this year at Runnells W.A., Marion (JG, AB, AJ). On the early side was a 13 Mar arrival at Montrose, Lee, IA (RLC). A 28 May sighting along the Current R. below Round Spring, MO was apparently of a nonbreeder (MR, BB, AN). Still a hypothetical species in Missouri, a **White-tailed**

Kite was reported 11 km e. of Columbia, Boone 7 May (BJ); if accepted by the Missouri records committee, this will be the 3rd sight record for the state. A Mississippi Kite was seen in the vicinity of last year's West Des Moines nest site 17 May (AB). Over 100 Bald Eagles feasted on a fish-kill in mid-Mar along the East Fork of the Des Moines R. and at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth (MCK). Swainson's Hawks continue to show fidelity to the farms e. of Springfield, where Charley Burwick spied one 28 Mar. Two Rough-legged Hawks were reported at S.C.R. 2 Mar (TR); lingering later in Iowa, 7 birds were reported, with a late migrant 25 Apr at Hawkeye (CJC, CE). Missouri found a single Golden Eagle this season, whereas Iowa birders reported 3. A female Peregrine Falcon was spotted below Round Spring on the Current R. 26 May (MR, BB, AN). Iowa had 2 Prairie Falcons, one 2 Mar in Hamilton (JJD) and another 6 Mar in Lyon (LAS); Missouri also had 2, both at Dunn Ranch 14 Mar (JH). A 22 Apr Yellow Rail at Sweet M, Bremer, IA was in normal habitat (Dan Mehner), but an injured migrant found 20 May on a driveway at Cherokee, Cherokee, IA was not (Dick Bierman). Not recorded in Iowa since 1999, a **King Rail** was discovered 11 May at Hawkeye (BD, James Huntington). A little more common in Missouri, a calling King Rail was heard at Prairie Slough C.A., Lincoln 30 Apr (JM, JE). A 4 Apr Sora at Saylorville W.A., Dallas, IA (JJD) was a touch early. Two Sandhill Cranes were found throughout the season at S.C.R. (m.ob.), with a 3rd added 19 Apr (TR). Lynn Miller spied a Sandhill Crane in far e. Jackson 8 Apr. Iowa's largest gathering was of 14 on 1 Mar at Pool Slough, Allamakee (Fred Leshner).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH DOVES

Both Black-bellied Plover and American Golden-Plover were found in low numbers this season. A storm 26 Mar grounded over 90 of the former at St. Louis (DR), while Iowa highs were 118 on 14 May in Hamilton (AB) and 82 flying over Algona, Kossuth 17 May (MCK). Not annual in the Region, **Snowy Plovers** were found in both states this season. KM discovered Missouri's first single at S.C.R. 28 Apr (many observers reported 2 Snowy, a Piping, and a Semipalmated Plover in the same scope view 1 May at L.

Contrary!), while on 10 May, a Snowy Plover was at Nodaway Valley C.A., Andrew (BJ). An Iowa Snowy was found 8 May at Hawkeye (JLF, THK, CE).

Possibly injured, a Solitary Sandpiper lingered at S.C.R. through at least 29 May (KM). Willet reports were much more numerous this season than last, with Missouri reporting groups of 42, 12, and 16 individuals. Iowa had counts of 39, 30, 34, 26, 51, 22, and 42. Two Whimbrels lingered a few hours 23 May at R.E.D.A. (m.ob.), but 16 there 25 May set a new state high count (CM). Four Iowa birds were found 17 May at Jester Park (m.ob.), while 2 were late in flooded fields in Hancock 28 May (Shane Patterson). S.C.R. held more than 200 Hudsonian Godwits 6 May for the seasonal high (TR). Iowa's earliest were 4 on 16 Apr at Saylorville Res., Polk (DK); between one and 13 birds were noted from nine additional counties, with the last 8 at Hawkeye 18 May (CE). Unexpected were 4 Red Knots that lingered 25–26 May at R.E.D.A. (DR). Close to a Missouri high count of Sanderlings, 105, was reported 23 May at R.E.D.A. Two record-early Iowa Semipalmated Sandpipers were noted 10 Apr at Port Neal Ponds, Woodbury (BFH). A Western Sandpipers was at S.C.R. 8 May (DE), with 2 there 15 May (MR, RM, MG). A 9 May Western was at Desoto N.W.R., Harrison, IA (Mark Orsag). Approximately 5000 Least Sandpipers were at Hawkeye 8 May (BD), five times the previous high spring count. Scattered concentrations of Dunlin were reported this season, with highs of 108 on 17 May at Jester Park (AB), 200 18 May at Hawkeye (CE), and a Missouri high of 300 on 25 May at R.E.D.A. (DR). Surprisingly, no Buff-breasted Sandpipers were reported this season. S.C.R. hosted a phalarope hat-trick 10 May, highlighted by a basic-plumaged Red Phalarope (KG, MR, AP).

An imm. Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 13 Mar (AB). A very early Caspian Tern was at R.E.D.A. 4 Apr (JM CM), as was a Common Tern there 17 Apr (BR). Large flocks of Common Terns were reported at three locations: 25 were found 14 May at Clear L., Cerro Gordo (PH), 23 were at Jester Park 22 May (AB), and Missouri had a high count of 40 at Smithville L. 6 May (K. Mayo). An early Iowa Black Tern 20 Apr was at Zirbel Slough, Cerro Gordo (CJF). This species often tends to concentrate in late May. Flocks of 652, 300, and 600 were reported in Iowa; and flocks of 175, 50, and 100 were seen in Missouri. Least Tern is casual in St. Louis, so 2 along the Mississippi R. 23 May were of note (JE). In Missouri, the feeder of Jim Joy in S. Columbia, Boone attracted a White-winged Dove 21 Apr, and Wally George photographed one at his Cedar Hill, Jefferson feeder 19 May.

SA A species decidedly uncommon away from the Missouri boot-heel, Black-necked Stilt was much in the news this season. An unprecedented incursion occurred in cen. Iowa, where 11 birds were tallied. Missouri reported 7 from three spots. The first Iowa birds were 2 found by John Ruttenbeck 11 May at Diehl Wetlands, Warren, where one lingered through 17 May. On 12 May, 6 were found spread between different locations at Hawkeye (m.ob.). Up to 4 were at Hawkeye until 18 May (AB, AJ, CE). Also on 12 May, 2 stilts were noted at Sedan Bottoms, a first for *Apanoose* (RLC, Tom Johnson). Finally, one at Ada Hayden Park, Story 15–18 May was also a first county record (WO, HZ). In Missouri, several out-of-place birds were seen: one was at Schell–Osage C.A. 6 Apr (KM); 4 were at Prairie Slough C.A., Lincoln 29 Apr (Donald Hays); and 2 were seen 23 May at R.E.D.A. (BR).

OWLS THROUGH WAXWINGS

An injured Iowa Snowy Owl was captured 5 Apr at Galbraith, *Kossuth* and sent to a rehabilitator (Esther Tripp, MCK). This late bird was particularly surprising after a winter without an invasion. A **Burrowing Owl** was found 26 Mar at a roadside burrow in s. *Kossuth*, IA and was last seen 31 Mar (Scott Moeller, MCK). The season's only Long-eared Owl report was of 3 lingering birds 27 Mar at Bois d'Arc, *Green*, MO (David & Barbara Belvins). Scattered Short-eared Owl reports were received from both states, with only one Northern Saw-whet Owl report this season, 17–21 Mar on the Judy Drenth farm near Decorah, *Winneshiak*, IA (*vide* DC). An early Iowa Common Nighthawk 22 Apr at Ames, *Story* (Doug Harr) was followed by another 23 Apr (JLF) in *Johnson*, both IA.

The first reported Ruby-throated Hummingbird was found around Springfield, MO 23 Mar (Bonnie Noble). Often a challenge to find in St. Louis, a Loggerhead Shrike at Weldon Springs C.A., *St. Charles* was a surprise 3 Apr (JM, JU). One or 2 Loggerheads were found in 18 counties from the w. two-thirds of the state. In Missouri, Northern Shrikes rarely seem to stay put. An exception was a wintering bird that remained until at least 24 Mar around the oxbows s. of St. Joseph (LL). Iowa reported 7 at various locations until 31 Mar. A single **Black-billed Magpie** was reported 6 Mar from Broken Kettle Grasslands, *Plymouth*, IA (BFH). A group of 10 Tree Swallows was already setting up shop at Binder L., Jefferson City, MO 10 Mar (JL). Iowa had two record-early Tree Swallows 13 Mar at Princeton W.A., *Scott* (DRo) and its 2nd earliest report of Cliff Swallow 11 Apr at Saylorville Res., *Polk* (BE). Suggestive of breeding, a Brown Creeper was heard singing persistently from a stand of Shortleaf Pine 6.5 km below the Pulltite access, Current R., *Shannon*, MO 25–26 May (MR, BB). Nest-building was observed in early Apr in *Johnson*, IA by Jill Beckman, but this nest was abandoned. A Rock Wren present 23–26 Mar at the Apache Motel in Rich Hill, MO (LH) was both early and rare at this location.

A single **Townsend's Solitaire** was reported 2 Mar at Waterman Creek, *O'Brien* (LAS). By the first of May, Hermit Thrushes should be n. of Missouri; a 2 May bird was unexpected at Busch C.A., *St. Charles* (BR). Iowa's last reported Hermits were 3 May at Bacon Creek Park, *Woodbury* (BFH) and 4–6 May at Call S.P., *Kossuth* (MCK). Iowa's 2nd earliest Wood Thrush was a singing bird 21 Apr at Waterworks Park, *Polk* (JG). A Gray Catbird 18 Apr at Guttenburg, *Clayton* (DAk) was record early for Iowa. It has been nearly 40 years since a **Sage Thrasher** was found in Missouri, but on 2 May a bird was reported from Joplin, *Newton*.

WARBLERS THROUGH SISKINS

A line of predawn storms 10 May dropped a huge group of Tennessee Warblers over nw. Missouri, where MR & AP located a minimum of 205 that day. Missouri birders reported 3 Black-throated Blue Warblers this May, while Iowa birders found 2. Single Iowa Worm-eating Warblers 12 May at Call S.P., *Kossuth* (RGo, MCK) and 19 May at Nine Eagles S.P., *Decatur* (AB) were outside their normal range. A Yellow-throated Warbler 27 Mar at Rockwood Reservation, *St. Louis* was a early (CM). Fifty Blackpoll Warblers at T.G.P. 15 May were notable (JE). The season's first Cerulean Warbler at Busiek S.F., *Christian*, MO 16 Apr was a little early (MA); at Weston Bend, MO, 4 were counted 16 May (TR). Connecticut Warblers were reported from just a few Missouri locations this spring; in Iowa, 20 reports of at least 24 birds came from locations across the e. half of the state, the first being 13 May at Hickory Hill Park, *Johnson* (THK, BD), where 4 were found 15 May (CE), and the last coming 26 May at Saylorville Res., *Polk* (Darwin Koenig). Half of the reports were from the period 22–24 May. An 18 May Kentucky Warbler at Gitche Manitou State Preserve, *Lyon* (DEC) was well out of range. An early Iowa Canada Warbler was found 8 May at Nobles I., *Allamakee* (DC).

A male **Western Tanager** visited an Iowa feeder 29 Apr–1 May at Oak L., *Kossuth* (Connie Mechler). An American Tree Sparrow lingered until 18 Apr at Gitche Manitou State Preserve, *Lyon* (DEC); an early Chipping Sparrow was recorded 19 Mar in *Jackson*, IA. Clay-colored Sparrows were more widespread in cen. and e. Iowa this season, with groups of up to 7 birds recorded. Only a single Lark Sparrow was reported from sw. Missouri—11 Apr at Fellows L. (Kay Johnson). Six birds around Bloomsdale, *St. Genevieve* were presumed to be a new breeding group 29 May (JE). Up to 12 Henslow's Sparrow were found in eight Iowa counties; over 50 were counted at Castlewood S.P., *St. Louis* 10 Apr (JU). Five singing Henslow's Sparrows were reported from Burr Oak Woods, *Jackson* 29 Apr; unfortunately, they did not linger to breed (CH). Three late Le Conte's Sparrow were at Union Hills Waterfowl Production Area, *Cerro Gordo*, IA 25 May (Katy Patterson). Iowa birders found 4 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows 9–25 May. A record-late Iowa Fox Sparrow was at Gitche Manitou N.A., *Lyon* 18 May. A 22 Mar Lincoln's Sparrow at S.C.R. was very early (TR), while 2 e. of Columbia 7 May (BJ) were late. A lingering 31 May Harris's Sparrow in Ann Johnson's yard in *Warren*, IA was remarkably late. Iowa had several groups of Smith's Longspurs reported, all in the

Cone M, *Louisa* area: 35 on 3 Apr (BSc), 100 on 4 Apr (CJC), and 200 on 4 Apr (CE). In Missouri, a flock was located at Bradford Farms 13 Mar (Susan Hazelwood), down to 3 birds on 24 Mar (BJ), and a single Smith's was at Dunn Ranch 10 Apr (SK).

Missouri's first **Black-headed Grosbeak** in a number of years was in se. Kansas City 5 May (RM); Iowa had two reports this season. No Lazuli Buntings were seen in Missouri this year, but Iowa had singles 15–18 May at a feeder in *Plymouth* (BFH), 19–26 May at Spirit L., *Dickinson* (ETh), and another there 28–29 May (ETh). Painted Buntings returned to the Weldon Spring area of the K.T. Trail and Henning C.A., *Taney*, MO (m.ob.). A late female Brewer's Blackbird was discovered at the Columbia Bottoms C.A., *St. Louis*, MO 25 Apr (BR), and Iowa birders found 7, 2 of those being late birds 7 May at Cedar Hills Sand Prairie, *Black Hawk*, IA (Walt Stephenson). The wintering flock of Great-tailed Grackles in downtown Kansas City, MO continues to grow: 4200 birds were tallied in 25 minutes with more coming 22 Mar (MG). A few lingered at the Bryan I. Stables, *St. Louis*, with 4–5 females reported 28 Mar (BR). After a dearth of Purple Finches in recent years, spring 2004 reports were up. The 52 counted 2 Mar at Springbrook S.P., *Guthrie*, IA (ETh) were as many as all other Iowa reports added together. A Common Redpoll lingered until 6 Mar at Mound City, MO (TR), and Iowa reported a few holdovers from the winter flight. There was a report of 18 Eurasian Tree Sparrows 19 Mar in *Muscatine*, IA (RIA, PHA); Missouri birds remain relatively common along the Mississippi R. from St. Louis northward.

Contributors: IOWA: Danny Akers (DAk), Reid Allen (RIA), Pam Allen (PHA), Aaron Brees, Dennis Carter (DC), Chris Caster (CJC), Doug Chapman (DEC), Ray Cummins (RLC), Bob Dick, Jim Dinsmore (JJD), Chris Edwards, Berry Engebretsen, Carolyn Fischer (CJF), Jim Fuller (JLF), Jay Gilliam, Rita Goranson (RGo), Paul Hertzell, Bill Huser (BFH), Ann Johnson, Matt Kenne (MCK), Tom H. Kent, Wolf Oesterreich, Loren Padelford (LJP), Babs Padelford (BKP), Don Robinson (DRo), Lee Schoenewe (LAS), Ed Thelen (ETh), Hank Zalelet. MISSOURI: Matt Andrews, Brett Benz, Lisa Berger, Joe Eades, Dave Easterla, Matt Gearheart, Kirby Goslee, Craig Hensley, Lawrence Herbert, Jack Hilsabeck, Brad Jacobs, Steve Kinder, Larry Lade, Jean Leonatti, Jim Malone, Kristi Mayo, Roger McNeill, Shane Pruett, Alexis Powell, Dean Rising (DRi), Mark Robbins, David Rogles (DR), Tommie Rogers, Bill Rowe, George Scheil, Josh Uffman. 🐦