

# Iowa & Missouri

Despite the heavy snows in some parts of Missouri, birders there were rewarded by a number of lingering passerines, perhaps enticed to stay by the warmer-than-usual temperatures. Iowa, too, had a warm December but without the excitement—even the waterfowl were gone on schedule. January weather was typical. In Iowa, the month ushered in an “invasion” of northern owls, while in Missouri, January’s cold weather sent the waterfowl packing in many areas but concentrated gulls and ducks at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area near St. Louis. February was well warmer than usual, with several heavy snowfalls in Missouri. The warmer temperatures kick-started migration of waterfowl, gulls, and icterids, which arrived in southern Missouri during the first week and had saturated the Region by the end of the month. Most of the usual winter visitants appeared in normal numbers. Always of interest, winter finches presented a good diversity of species but only small numbers of most; curiously, there were more Purple Finches and Red Crossbills recorded in Missouri than in Iowa.

After years of exemplary service to *The Bluebird*, Brad Jacobs has stepped down as its winter field reports editor, just one of his many contributions to Missouri’s ornithology. His insight and expertise will be sorely missed by myself and many others. The void, however, will be admirably filled by Tommie Rogers of Mound City. In just three years in the state, she has developed an enviable grasp of the state’s birdlife and brought with her the skill to produce an excellent seasonal report. Welcome on board, Tommie.

**Abbreviations:** P.S.P. (Prairie S.P., Barton, MO); R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); S.C.N.W.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO); S.L.N.W.R. (Swan Lake N.W.R., Chariton, MO).

## GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

A Horned Grebe on 28 Feb at R.E.D.A. was early (CM). A remarkable heron season in Iowa included an American Bittern 2 Jan in Clay (LS), a Great Egret on the Saylorville Res. C.B.C. (a first record), and a wintering Black-crowned Night-Heron at Cedar Rapids for the 7th consecutive year (BS). There were 100 Black Vultures at Table Rock L. dam 13 Feb (SK) and 58 through Jan in St. Genevieve MO (JE).

About 20 reports of 1–330 Cackling Geese were submitted in the Region, but few reports included details (one in Jan in the St. Louis area was well documented; †BR). Until both observers and editors become more comfortable with the separation of this species from small Canada Geese, details would be helpful. Snow Goose numbers peaked on 28 Dec at S.L.N.W.R. at 250,000



(SK, LL); similar numbers had returned to S.C.N.W.R. by 20 Feb (TR). Mute Swans were reported in small numbers from five locations, while Trumpeter Swans continued to increase, with peaks of 70 at R.E.D.A. (KMc) and 13 on 19 Feb in Warren, IA (JG). A Tundra Swan was seen in Dec and Feb at R.E.D.A.; in Iowa, there were 857 on the Mississippi R. for the Clinton, Iowa C.B.C. Despite the milder winter, there were few reports of wintering dabblers, with most out of the Region by 1 Jan. Migrants returned to both states during the last two weeks of Feb, e.g., 9000 Northern Pintail on 21 Feb at S.C.N.W.R. (TR). Divers made the season slightly more interesting. Canvasbacks peaked at 1000 at R.E.D.A. 16 Jan and 40,000 in late Feb at their usual Pool 19 staging area in Iowa (RCu, CE). Greater Scaup had a good showing, with 140 on 9 Dec at L. Jacomo, Jackson, MO (KM), 50 on 13 Feb at R.E.D.A., where Bill Rowe noted that they outnumbered Lessers, and 49 on 5 Dec at Spirit L., Dickinson, IA (ET). Surf Scoter reports were all from Iowa, with 2 on 7 Dec in Scott (JF) and one on the Keokuk C.B.C. Black Scoters were all from Dec: 2 at R.E.D.A. (MA, CM, m.ob.), one in Scott, IA

## Robert Cecil

1315 41st Street

Des Moines, Iowa 50311

(wewarb@aol.com)

(JF), one at West Okoboji L., Dickinson, IA (LS), and 2 on the Keokuk, Iowa C.B.C. After missing the species last winter, Missouri had 2 Long-tailed Ducks on 16 Dec–30 Jan at R.E.D.A. (DR, JU, m.ob.).

Gray Partridge was reported only from five contiguous counties in n.-cen. Iowa, where there were six reports of 3–16 birds. Missouri Greater Prairie-Chickens included 30 on 29 Dec at P.S.P. and 25 on 27 Feb in Harrison (SK). An Osprey was documented 25 Jan in Knox, MO (†AD). Exceptional were 35 Northern Harriers 21 Dec at P.S.P. (MR). Unusual among three Iowa reports of Northern Goshawks were 3 (1 ad. and 2 imms.) together 30 Jan in Winneshiek (DK, DC); in Missouri, one was observed 11 Dec in St. Charles (BR). There was a strong showing of Rough-legged Hawks in n. and



This Black-chinned Hummingbird was in Farmington, Francois County, Missouri 9–19 (here 18) December 2004. Banded by the photographer, it was enjoyed by many during its stay. Photograph by Lanny Chambers.

cen. Iowa, but few made it to Missouri—the most southerly of six reports was one 15 Feb at P.S.P. (DW). Golden Eagles were reported from Henry, Mississippi, Harrison, Shelby, and Lincoln, MO and Marshall, Clayton, Winneshiek, and Allamakee, IA. At Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines, Jay Gilliam concluded that, based upon photos, 9 Merlins were present at one time or another during the season—up to 6 were seen at one time (RC, m.ob.). There were 22 other reports from the Region, mostly from Iowa—overall, an excellent season. Unprecedented was a report of 4 Prairie Falcons—3 in view at once—on 14 Jan in Buchanan, MO (LL). Other Missouri reports were of singles: 5 Dec in Lafayette (KM), 12 Dec in Clinton (CV), 31 Dec at P.S.P. (CB), and 15 Feb in Jasper (DW); Iowa reports included singles 26 Feb in Woodbury (BH) and on the Westfield and Des Moines C.B.C.s.

### RAILS THROUGH OWLS

A Virginia Rail was heard 18 Dec at the Columbia S.T.P., MO (†PM). Unusual were mid-winter reports of single Sandhill Cranes on 7 Jan at Saylorville Res. (AB) and 1 Feb at Grand Pass C.A. Saline, MO (DW); migrants appeared on 17 Feb in Cass, MO (LR) and reached n. Iowa by late Feb (FL, JG). There were several very late or wintering Missouri shorebirds, such as 2 Greater Yellowlegs on 18 Dec at Four Rivers C.A., Vernon (†MR) and a Spotted Sandpiper on 18 Dec–30 Jan on the Mississippi R., Lincoln (†SS, ph. JU). Missouri Least Sandpipers lingered in unusual numbers, such as 21 on 17–18 Dec and 6 on 27–30 Jan at Wallace S.P., Clinton (†SS), 3 on 18 Dec at Four Rivers C.A., Vernon (†MR, †KM), and 6 on 27–30 Jan in Lincoln (CM, JU). Finally, there were 4 Dun-

lin on 7 Dec in Linn, MO (LL, SK). American Woodcocks returned early to s. Iowa, with one noted 26 Feb in Jefferson (DP).

The largest concentrations of Ring-billed Gulls were in Iowa: 7000 at Saylorville Res.



A female Lark Bunting photographed 4 December 2004 at Weldon Spring Conservation Area, St. Charles County, Missouri was perhaps second in winter for Missouri in winter. Photograph by Josh Uffman.

26 Feb (SJD) and 10,000 in Scott 27 Feb (CC). A California Gull at R.E.D.A 2–18 Dec (†JM, †CM, m.ob.) furnished about the 15th Missouri record; an Iowa report was referred to the records committee. Missouri Thayer's

Gulls were all from the St. Louis area and peaked at 3 first-winter birds 28 Dec at R.E.D.A. (MA, CM, JM); Iowa reports peaked at 6 during the season in the Davenport area (SF, CC, m.ob.) and 13 during early Jan at Des Moines (AB, m.ob.). At least one Lesser Black-backed Gull was present from 3 Dec through Jan at R.E.D.A.; overall, 2 first-winter, one second-winter, one third-winter, and 2 ads. were identified here (JE, CM, JM, KM, DR, MT, DW). Iowa birds peaked at 4 in Scott (SF), with singles at Saylorville Res. 11–20 Dec (JG, WO, SSP) and Iowa City 17–18 Jan (RD, CC, m.ob.). Two Glaucous Gulls made it to R.E.D.A. (MT, JU); among four Iowa reports, the most were up to 5 from late Dec through Jan at Des Moines (RC, AB, m.ob.) and up to 4 in Jan and Feb in Scott (SF). Great Black-backed Gulls made two appearances: an ad. 29 Dec at Pool 15 Scott, IA (SF) and a first-winter bird at R.E.D.A. 16 & 24 Jan (MT, DW). An unusual cen. Missouri Black-legged Kittiwake lingered from the fall season until 2 Dec at Bagnell Dam, Miller (†KM, MA); unusual for Iowa were three reports: one ad. on the Keokuk C.B.C., one first-winter bird at Red Rock Res. 26–27 Dec (†EW, ph. RS), and another first-winter 30 Dec in Scott (†CE).

The largest of the four Eurasian Collared-Dove reports from Missouri was of 18 birds 29 Dec in St. Genevieve (JE); Iowa had 1–8 birds reported from 10 locations. Barn Owls made a good showing in Missouri, with singles 18 Dec in Nodaway (DE), carrying food to a nest box on 15 Feb in Vernon (DW), and 22 Feb in Greene (DR). Snowy Owls made four Iowa appearances, all in Dec. Long-eared Owls appeared in average numbers, while Short-eareds were down in Iowa but up in Missouri.

### HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Remarkable was Missouri's first Black-chinned Hummingbird, an imm. or female in St. Francois 9–19 Dec (†LC, ph. JE, m.ob.), and almost as remarkable were 3 Rufous Hummingbirds: a female in Jasper mid-Nov–14 Jan (†LH) and 2 females in Cape Girardeau 11 Dec (†LC, †BE, LC), one of which remained through 13 Jan (BE). Only one Red-headed Woodpecker was reported

**SA** Iowa's "invasion" of northern owls was less dramatic than Minnesota's but still produced nearly as much excitement among local birders. The biggest news was also the biggest disappointment—a belated report of a Boreal Owl, Iowa's first, photographed 14 Nov in George Wyth S.P., Blackhawk. It was found by Scott Garrett who, with a little help from his friends, identified it from his photographs. It was not relocated. Tipped off by the Minnesota invasion, Iowa birders searched for other owls and were rewarded with Iowa's 2nd Northern Hawk Owl 14 Feb in the surprised little town of Manly in Worth (ph., †PH, †RGO, †CF, m.ob.). Perhaps the most southerly of the continent's hawk owls this season, this one remained through the end of Feb. Not unexpected but also successful in getting birders moving were three reports of single Great Gray Owls: in Boone 16–18 Jan (ph., †JG, ph., †AJ), in Buchanan 14–15 Feb (ph., †SC), and in Dickinson 16–19 Feb (ph., †J&LK). Northern Saw-whet Owls, however, appeared in just normal numbers in Iowa; the most southerly were in Missouri: 2 on 7 Dec–30 Jan in Knox (KM) and one on 3 Feb in Holt (DW).

in Iowa after the C.B.C. period. Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers were found in *Clay* and *Barton*, MO and *Polk* and *Johnson*, IA. At the edge of its range was a Pileated Woodpecker in *Platte*, MO 22 Dec (DW). Eastern Phoebe's are rare away from se. Missouri; unusual were up to 3 during the season in *Greene* (BB, DB, DTh) and a single 11 Jan in *Jasper* (DW). A Northern Shrike made it to *Harrison*, MO (DW, SK); Iowa had a normal season, with about 20 reports. A Blue-headed Vireo 17 Dec in *Mississippi* in extreme se. Missouri was quite late (BE).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread throughout the Region all season. A Bewick's Wren in *Buchanan*, MO 3 Dec was a bit out of range (LL). Seventeen Sedge Wrens at P.S.P. 21 Dec (MR) and a Marsh Wren on the Keokuk, IA C.B.C. were noteworthy. An excellent find was a Mountain Bluebird in *Mississippi*, MO 17 Dec (ph., †BE). Presently casual in Iowa, there were about 10 Townsend's Solitaires there this season. The only Varied Thrush in either state was in Iowa City 30 Dec-4 Jan (CC, DPe). Missouri hosted 2 Gray Catbirds: 23-26 Dec at St. Louis (†KM, †MG) and 4 Jan in *Andrew* (†LG). A Northern Mockingbird in *Winneshieck*, IA 1 Feb (DC) was well n. of its expected range. An American Pipit on the Cedar Rapids C.B.C. furnished one of a handful of Iowa winter records; among four Missouri reports, exceptional were 25 on the C.B.C. in *Bates* (†KM) and 9 on 26 Dec in *Clay* (†DW). Casual in Iowa, single Bohemian Waxwings were noteworthy in *Dickinson* 6 Dec (†DPe) and in *Storv* 13 Feb (†SP, †KP).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Missouri's balmy Dec was credited with keeping warblers around: in addition to the expected Yellow-rumped, there were single Orange-crowneds on 18 Dec in *Wayne* (†SD) and 13-28 Jan in *Stone* (ph., †KL); a Pine in *St. Charles* 27 Feb (CM); 2 Palms in *Mississippi* 17 Dec (†BE); a Black-and-white in *St. Genevieve* 9 Dec (†DW); and a Common Yellowthroat in *Clay* 1 Feb (DW). One Spotted Towhee was found in Iowa and 4 in Missouri. Wintering or extraordinarily early was a Chipping Sparrow on 27 Feb in *Winebago*, IA (†SP, †KP); a Missouri bird in Columbia was late 12-17 Dec (ph., †EW). A Lark Bunting brought out the troops to Weldon Springs C.A., *St. Charles* 4 Dec (†BR, m.ob.). Overall, lingering sparrows were scarce in Iowa this season but about normal for Missouri; the best was a Le Conte's 8 Dec in *Polk* (†JB), Iowa's first winter report in several years. Only 2 Oregon Juncos were reported, both in Iowa. Smith's Longspur reports were from Missouri: 5 on 11 Dec in *Jasper* (KM) and one on 21 Dec at P.S.P. (MR). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak brightened Thompson R. Wetland, Liv-

*ingston*, MO 29 Dec (†SK), while an ad. male Black-headed Grosbeak made a one-day appearance 29-30 Jan in *Clayton*, IA (ph., †DA, †CC).

The status of Eastern Meadowlarks in Iowa is unclear, but one was identified by call in *Poweshiek* 29 Jan (DK). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was at P.S.P. 11 Jan (ph., †DW). Iowa's only Brewer's Blackbird after the first week of Jan was a single 9 Jan in *Warren*, IA (JS): Missouri had two reports exceeding 100 birds: in *Stoddard* 18 Dec (†SD) in *Pike* 30 Dec (†BR, †SS). Small numbers of Great-tailed Grackles are wintering in cen. Iowa, e.g., 7 in *Tama* 10 Jan (PM) and 17 in *Warren* 29 Jan (RA, PA).

Purple Finches made a modest showing overall, two exceptions being 300 in Columbia, MO 24 Jan (PM) and 50 in *Greene*, MO 1 Feb (CB). Missouri yielded more Red Crossbill reports than Iowa; the high counts among eight total reports received were 18 in *St. Charles*, MO 1 Dec (CM), 10 in *Clay*, MO 5 Dec (KM), and 14 in *Poweshiek*, IA on 3 Feb (DK). White-winged Crossbill reports were limited to Iowa, with 4 in *O'Brien* 15 Jan (LS) and one in *Floyd* 12 Feb (PH, RG). The most southerly Common Redpolls were in Iowa, in *Polk* (DT) and *Dallas* (RA, PA); eight other reports totaling 13 birds were received. It was a pretty good year for Pine Siskins, with up to 3 making it to *Greene* in sw. Missouri (DB); high counts were 47 in *Clayton*, IA 13 Feb (DA) and 30 in *Buchanan*, MO 29 Dec (LL).

**Corrigendum:** A Feb 2004 Common Raven was not accepted by the Iowa Bird Records Committee.

**Cited contributors:** Danny Akers, Reid Allen, Pam Allen, Matt Andrews, David Blevins, Joe Boyles, Aaron Brees, Bo Brown, Charley Burwick, Sondra Cabel, Dennis Carter, Chris Caster, Robert Cecil (RC), Lanny Chambers, Ray Cummings (RCu), Bob Dick (RD), Stephen Dilks (SD), Stephen Dinsmore (SJD), Ann Downing, Joe Eades, David Easterla, Bill Eddleman, Chris Edwards, Carolyn Fischer, Steve Freed, Jim Fuller, Leo Galloway, Jay Gilliam, Rita Goranson, Lawrence Hays, Paul Hertzell, Bill Huser, Ann Johnson, Steve Kinder, Darwin Koenig, Jim & Lisa Kraninger, Larry Lade, Kathy Lee, Fred Leshner, Charlene Malone, Jim Malone, Kristie Mayo (KM), Paul McKenzie, Keith McMullen (KM), Wolf Oesterreich, Shane Patterson, Katy Patterson, Diane Pesek (DPe), Diane Porter (DP), Mark Proescholdt, Mark Robbins, Tommie Rogers, David Rogles, Bill Rowe, Bill Scheible, Lee Schoenewe, Scott Schuette, Jim Sinclair, Russ Stilwell, Ed Thelen, Mike Thelen, Dennis Thompson (DT), Dorothy Thurman (DTh), Josh Uffman, Chris Valentine, Edge Wade, Doug Willis. ☺



**GET DOWN  
AND DIRTY  
FOR  
AMERICA.**

*And when you get your hands  
dirty in programs like National  
Public Lands Day, you help  
spruce up your beautiful lands.  
Last year, on this day, nearly  
80,000 volunteers built trails,  
bridges, planted native trees  
and removed trash.*

*To find out how you can help,  
go to [www.npld.com](http://www.npld.com) or call  
800-VOL-TEER (800-865-8337).*

**HELPING HANDS  
FOR AMERICA'S LANDS**



© 2004 Muench Photography, Inc.