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Iowa & Missouri



Bill Eddleman

Modest rain across Iowa in early August accompanied a welcome relief from 90–100° F temperatures, while Missouri remained dry and hot; in Iowa, temperatures returned to near normal, and precipitation levels were slightly above normal there but much below normal in much of Missouri. The first half of September was mild, and much of Missouri continued dry except for isolated thunderstorms. September gradually grew drier and cooler, and the first freeze of the season was recorded at Spencer, Iowa on the 20th. Relatively mild conditions over most of the Region persisted into early October. Continued southerly winds kept both weather and birds quiet in the skies, but precipitation began to fall in many areas that had seen little in Missouri. A strong cold front 10–12 October resulted in a statewide freeze

in Iowa, with significant snowfall in the north. Another front pushed through at the end of October, plunging temperatures to well below normal. Much of November saw erratic fluctuations in temperature between cold and above-normal temperatures. Heavy snow hit northern Iowa in early November, only to be washed away within a week by rain. The result was a relatively slow and erratic migration, with some early arrival records and some birds lingering late.

Abbreviations: Grammer (Grammer Grove, Marshall, IA); Hitchcock (Hitchcock W.M.A. hawkwatch, Pottawattamie, IA); M.S.L. (Maryville Sewage Lagoons, Nodaway, MO); R.M.B.S. (Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, formerly Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); Saylorville (Saylorville Res., Polk, IA); S.C.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO); S.R. (Smithville Res., Clay/Clinton, MO); T.G.P. (Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO); T.R.W. (Thompson River Wetlands, Livingston, MO).

WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Low waterfowl numbers in n. Iowa contrasted with large numbers along the Mississippi R. and cen. reservoirs. Waterfowl increased in Missouri after water conditions improved in mid-season. A record of 6 **Black-billed Whistling-Ducks**, documented at the St. Louis Zoo 8 Aug 2005, is being evaluated by the Missouri Bird Records Committee. A summering Greater White-fronted Goose at R.M.B.S. remained through fall (SS, CM, BR, †JPU, m.ob.). Snow Goose numbers peaked at 102,000 at S.C.R. 28–29 Nov (DE, TR), and 300,000+ flew over Hitchcock 29 Nov (JT).

Ross's Geese peaked at 624 at S.C.R. 28 Nov (DE). Two **Black Brant** in Clay, IA 10 Oct provided the 2nd state record for the *nigricans* subspecies (†LAS, †DB, †DA). Cackling Geese arrived early in Iowa, with 4 at Saylorville 21 Sep (AB); the peak was 1630 in Guthrie, IA 29 Nov (SJD). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service counted 52,700 Tundra Swans along the Mississippi R. between Pools 4 and 14 (partly in Minnesota and Wisconsin) 20 Nov. Thousands of wigeon, scaup, and Canvasbacks on the Mississippi R. in Allamakee, IA arrived with the 10–12 Oct cold front, as did 700 Blue-winged Teal at De Soto N.W.R., Harrison, IA (BB), 3045 Green-winged Teal at Saylorville, and 30 American Black Ducks at Pool 9, Allamakee, IA (U.S.F.W.S.). Canvasback numbers peaked at 161,750 in Pool 9 on 7 Nov (U.S.F.W.S.). Continuing a recent fall trend, all three scoters were widespread. The first Surf Scoters were at four locations in Iowa on 11–12 Oct; Regional totals were 17 at 10 Iowa sites and 8 at six Missouri sites. White-winged Scoters appeared in Missouri at R.M.B.S. 1 Nov (JWE, JPU); totals were 14 at four Iowa locations and 6 at four Missouri sites. The first Black Scoter was a record-early bird at Saylorville 12 Oct (JG); 7 were at four Iowa sites; and 10 were at six Missouri sites. Each state had five Long-tailed Duck sightings. An early female Bufflehead was at Cardinal Marsh, Wineshiek, IA 20 Aug (DK). Similarly, a Common Merganser was at Saylorville through Sep (†JG, AB, SJD, RC).

Gray Partridge was 35% below the 10-year average in Iowa and only reported n. of Story (Iowa Department of Natural Resources). Ring-necked Pheasants declined 22% since

2005 and were 17% below the 10-year average. Greater Prairie-Chickens seem to be doing well at the lek in Ringgold, IA (KD, JS). A flock of 8 flew across Hwy. 136 about 16 km w. of Burlington Jct., Atchison, MO 16 Aug (DE). Notable loon reports included 3 Iowa and 5 Missouri Red-throated Loons and 4 total Pacific Loons, one in Missouri and 3 in Iowa. Four Red-necked Grebes were reported in Iowa, the earliest being in Kossuth, IA 14 Sep (RG); the sole Missouri bird was at Thomas Hill Res., Randolph 19-24 Nov (JWE, Jean Leonatti et al.).

Two imm. or female Anhingas were seen soaring over Hitchcock 6 Nov, a 2nd record for Iowa (†JT). Several heron species lingered, including a record-late American Bittern n. of Ames, Story, IA 27 Nov (WO). Five Great Egrets lingered until late Nov, including a record-late one in Guthrie, IA 29 Nov. Snowy Egret is now regular through Sep in the

St. Louis, MO area; one at Columbia Bottom C.A., St. Louis, MO 24 Sep was late (BR). One late Cattle Egret was at Otter Slough C.A., Stoddard, MO 25 Nov (SD, BR). A Green Heron in Delaware, IA 4 Nov provided the 2nd latest record for the state (BSc), while a Glossy/White-faced Ibis in Johnson, IA 27 Oct was record late (DP).

A highlight of the fall was an imm. Swallow-tailed Kite at Weldon Spring C.A., St. Charles, MO 10-28 Aug (†CM, †DE, m.ob.). In w. Iowa, raptor counts were below three-year averages at Hitchcock (MO), but hawk-watchers had record-high counts at Grammer, in the east (MPr). An exception at Hitchcock was 11 Oct, when 631 Red-tailed Hawks passed, and 17 Oct, when the Region's only Ferruginous Hawk of the season was spotted (†MO). At Grammer, record highs included Bald Eagle (335) and Broad-winged Hawk (1703). An imm. Swainson's Hawk was at unusual location near Brumley, Miller, MO 23 Sep (†BR, Brad Jacobs et al.). Peregrine Falcon reports included 31 at Hitchcock, 9 at Grammer, 20 at other Iowa sites, and 11 in Missouri. The earliest migrant was at Sunshine L., Ray, MO 5 Aug (RF). Twelve Prairie Falcons were sighted, the first in Pottawattamie, IA 11 Oct (MO et al.).

RAILS THROUGH TERNS

The only Yellow Rail reported was in Decatur,



This Sandhill Crane, photographed just north of Sikeston, Scott County, Missouri, first appeared in mid-July 2006 and remained through at least mid- (here 3) September. Small numbers of Sandhill Cranes have summered in Missouri in recent years, but this one was the farthest south. Photograph by Leslie Keith Koller.

IA 4 Oct (†BBA, †NJM). An imm. Common Moorhen in Fremont, IA 27 Oct (KD) was the 2nd latest on record. Summering Sandhill Cranes lingering into fall in Missouri included an ad. just n. of Sikeston, Scott through at least mid-Sep (ph., †Leslie Koller) and 2-4 at B. K. Leach C.A. and Clarence Cannon N.W.R., Lincoln through 16 Sep (SS et al., Al & Lois Smith). On 5 Sep, 3 imm. Whooping Cranes from the Wisconsin project arrived in Hancock, IA and stayed through Oct (Joan Garland, SCEP).

Generally, shorebird habitat was poor (too dry, big rivers too high) but better along the reservoir system in the cen. and s. parts of Iowa. American Golden-Plovers hit their highest count since the early 1990s: 205 at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth, IA 5 Oct (PH, MCK). Possibly the largest fall concentration of Semipalmated Plovers on record was 175 at Pinchey Bottoms, Marion, IA 6 Aug (JS, AB); among the few in Missouri were 3 tying the latest date at Montrose C.A., Henry, MO 28 Oct (SD). Five Piping Plovers were away from Missouri R. nesting areas in Iowa (RG et al.); the sole Missouri bird was one at Schell-Osage C.A., St. Clair, MO 3 Sep (Lisa Berger, Charles Burwick). Among several late Solitary Sandpipers was a nearly record-late bird at Macon City L., Macon, MO 24 Oct (Andrew Forbes, EW et al.). Small numbers of Greater Yellowlegs occurred into Nov (SD,

BR). A total 1035 Lesser Yellowlegs at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth, IA (SJD) was the largest in fall in Iowa since 1991. The 2nd latest fall Ruddy Turnstone was at Saylorville 21 Oct (AB). A Red Knot was in Marion, IA 10 Aug (†AB, †JR), while the only Missouri report was of one at Bean L., Platte, MO 8 Oct (Doug Willis). Notable high counts of Least Sandpipers included a record 690 at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth, IA 30 Aug (MCK). A Ruff that first appeared in summer was still present at Runnells W.A., Marion, IA 1 Aug (RIA, PHA). An injured juv. Long-billed Dowitcher furnished the 2nd latest record for the state at Runnells W.A., Polk, IA 26 Nov (SJD). Two Red Phalaropes in Iowa included one at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth 13-16 Sep (†MCK, †SSP, †PH, †DA, †JG) and one at Rathbun Res., Appanoose 14 Oct (†SJD).

Single Laughing Gulls occurred at Saylorville 22 Aug (†AB, †JG) and Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 8-24 Sep (†JG, †CC). Numbers of Franklin's Gulls peaked at 19,400 at Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 11 Oct (SJD) and 9000 at Rathbun L., Appanoose, IA 11 Oct (RLC). Franklin's Gull counts were relatively low in Missouri, the most being 600 at S.R. 28 Oct (JWE). An ad. Little Gull was at Rathbun L., Appanoose, IA 11 Oct (†SJD). The faithful Black-headed Gull was at its traditional spot at Spirit L., Dickinson, IA 4 Aug-13 Oct (ET, †JG). Bonaparte's Gulls peaked at 780 at Saylorville 10 Nov (AB, SJD) and 600 at Thomas Hill Res., Randolph/Macon, MO 28 Oct (JWE). An ad. Mew Gull was at Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 24 Sep-2 Oct (†CE, †CC, †MI, †DA, †AB). The 2nd earliest Lesser Black-backed Gull on record was at Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 17 Sep (JG, AB). The five sightings of Sabine's Gulls included up to 3 each at Saylorville 24 Sep-17 Oct (m.ob.) and Thomas Hill Res., Randolph/Macon, MO 23-25 Sep (JPU, EW, Phil Wire, SK). A Common Tern at Saylorville 24 Oct (SJD, AB) was the latest in the state, and the same was true of a tardy Forster's Tern at S.R. 28 Oct (JWE). Large flocks of Black Terns included 150+ at Winfield Dam, Lincoln, MO 3 Aug (SS) and 200 at Red Rock Res., Marion, IA 8 Sep (JG, SJD).

DOVES THROUGH WRENS

Over 100 Eurasian Collared-Doves were near

grain elevators in Chillicothe, *Livingston*, MO 5 Nov (SK). Two Barn Owls were at new locations in Iowa: *Decatur* (†NJM) and *Ida* (BFH, ph. DoP). A real surprise was a **Burrowing Owl** at Seven Cities Sod Farm, *Scott*, IA. The farm owners said it has been there two summers but was only pointed out to birders 7 Sep and stayed until 1 Oct (†WMZ, †JG, †SE, †DA, †CC, †JSc). A Common Nighthawk in *Winnebago*, IA 21 Oct was the 3rd latest on record (JB), and 804 were tallied at Kirkwood, St. Louis, MO 11 Sep (JWE). A record-late Whip-poor-will was calling 16 km n. of Rogersville, *Webster*, MO 30 Sep (Andrew Kinslow). Providing considerable excitement to photographers, Iowa's 2nd Green Violet-ear appeared at a feeder in Sioux City, *Woodbury* 14-19 Sep (†JLP, †BFH, †GLV). Pileated Woodpeckers are becoming more prevalent in nw. Missouri, where 2-3 were found at Bob Brown C.A., *Holt* 15 Aug (MR); up 3 were at Trudeau C.A., *Atchison* 15 Aug (MR); and one was at S.C.R. 25 Nov (Sherry Leonardo, m.ob.).

SA It was a very good year for fall migrants at the banding station at Missouri Western College in St. Joseph, *Buchanan*, MO, the only known station operating in the Region, 31 Aug–24 Oct (Jack Hilsabeck). Some notable banding totals and dates included 15 Blue-headed Vireos; Marsh Wrens 18 Sep and 6 Oct; 48 Ruby-crowned Kinglets 17 Sep–24 Oct; 68 Orange-crowned Warblers 24 Sep–19 Oct; 113 Nashville Warblers 31 Aug–18 Oct; 6 Mourning Warblers; 20 Wilson's Warblers, the last 22 Sep; 58 Song Sparrows; 34 Lincoln's Sparrows, the earliest 13 Sep; 30 Swamp Sparrows; and 83 White-throated Sparrows, beginning 30 Sep.

The songbird migration seemed intermittent and weak to some observers but great to others. Huge numbers of swallows and a strong *Catharus* and warbler flight were noted in cen. Iowa, and a strong warbler migration occurred in ne. Iowa (SJD, DeC, MPr, AB). Alder Flycatchers were first seen 4 Aug in Missouri: 3 at Bob Brown C.A., *Holt* and one at Dupree C.A., *Buchanan* (MR); the latest was one in *Greene* 31 Aug (Dorothy Thurman). A juv. Eastern Phoebe was record late in *Cerro Gordo*, IA 19 Nov (PH, RG). Two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were found in Iowa: in *Kossuth* 13 Sep (†MCK, CF) and at Owego Wetlands, *Woodbury* 2 Oct (GLV). A Fish Crow remained at Winfield Dam, *Lincoln*, MO 11 Oct (JWE). About 14,000 Tree Swallows were present at Saylorville 21 Sep (AB, SJD), and 800 Northern Rough-winged Swallows were more than usual at Myre Slough, *Winnebago*, IA 11 Sep. Three swallow species were the 2nd latest on record in *Polk*, IA: a

juv. Tree Swallow at Big Creek S.P. 25 Nov (SJD); a Purple Martin 23 Oct (AB); and 12 Northern Rough-winged Swallows 19 Oct (JS). A high total of 55-60 Sedge Wrens was at Bob Brown C.A., *Holt*, MO 15 Aug (MR).

KINGLETS THROUGH FINCHES

A record early Ruby-crowned Kinglet visited T.G.P. 19 Aug (†Jackie Chain). Flocks of more than 100 American Pipits are not often observed in the Region, but sightings this fall included 200 at Hawk Point Sod Farm, *Lincoln*, MO 21 Oct (JWE); 125+ at Mozingo L., *Nodaway*, MO 21 Oct; 250 in *Cass*, IA 22 Oct (AB, JG); 350 in *Audubon*, IA 27 Oct (SSP); and 200 late birds at St. Joseph, *Buchanan*, MO 18 Nov (RF). **Sprague's Pipits** were found twice in Iowa: 3 at Kellerton Grasslands, *Ringgold* 3 Oct (†JS) and one in *Clay* 14 Oct (†LAS, †JG, †PH, †DA). As birders continue to focus on its specialized habitat, this species may prove to be regular in Iowa.

Thirty-one warbler species were reported in Iowa this season, with 16 Black-throated Green Warblers and 25 Chestnut-sided Warblers especially remarkable totals in *Van Buren* 9 Sep (SJD, AB); likewise noteworthy were 19 Nashville Warblers in *Story* 23 Sep (SSP), 24 Black-and-white Warblers in *Polk* 3 Sep (BEn), and up to 50 Bay-breasted Warblers in *Decatur* 12 Sep (NJM). Yellow-rumped Warblers arrived early, with an imm. in *Clay* 20 Aug (LAS) the 3rd earliest ever; numbers peaked 8 Oct with 200 in *Jefferson*, IA (DiP) and 130 in *Story*, IA (KLP, SSP). A high of 139 was at Big Lake S.P., *Holt*, MO 11 Oct (TR). Missouri's 5th Audubon's Warbler was at Thomas Hill Res., *Randolph* 25 Nov (†JWE, †JPU, SS). Several warblers lingered at feeders, including a Yellow-throated Warbler that returned to *Scott*, IA and stayed through the season (WMZ); a male Prairie Warbler at Bonne Terre, *St. Francois*, MO 11-12 Nov (ph., †Jenny Gunn), record late by two months; and a record-late Northern Waterthrush at Richmond Heights, *St. Louis*, MO 12 Nov (†M. Voss). A rare fall Blackpoll Warbler was at Forest Park, *St. Louis* 23 Oct (ph., †Sherry McCowan). A Louisiana Waterthrush furnished the 2nd latest record for Iowa in *Van Buren* 9 Sep (SSP, KLP). Connecticut Warblers are exceedingly rare migrants in Iowa, so 2 at Bacon Creek Park, *Woodbury* 25 Aug (†BFH) are noteworthy. An ad. male Hooded Warbler, a probable breeder and casual for w. Missouri, lingered at Weston Bend S.P., *Platte* 10 Sep (†Kristi Mayo).

A record-late Lark Sparrow was in *Polk*, IA 15 Oct (BEn). Good numbers of Grasshopper, Henslow's, and Le Conte's Sparrows were reported from both states. A Henslow's Sparrow

in *Decatur*, IA 30 Oct was record late (†NJM), while a Le Conte's in *Clay*, IA 26 Aug was record early (LAS). A record-early Lincoln's Sparrow was at Bigelow Marsh, *Holt*, MO 31 Aug (TR). A White-crowned Sparrow in *Tama* 21 Sep was the 3rd earliest ever for Iowa (MPr). Dark-eyed Juncos of note included the state's 2nd earliest in *Marshall*, IA 13 Sep (MPr). An estimated 3000 Lapland Longspurs turned up in rural *Polk*, IA 10 Nov (AB). Smith's Longspurs were in four different Iowa counties, the peak of 21 coming from *Kossuth* 15 Oct (MCK). A record-high count 92 Dickcissels was made at Bigelow Marsh, *Holt*, MO 31 Aug (TR). At least 130 Western Meadowlarks were at the Rosecrans Airport, *Buchanan*, MO 13 Oct (MR). Five Brewer's Blackbirds in *Clay*, IA 1 Oct were 2nd earliest on record (†LAS), and 300 were in *Warren*, IA 8 Nov (JS). Underlining concern about the decline of Purple Finch in the Region, the sole Missouri bird was at Mound City, *Holt* 22 Nov (TR). Common Redpolls were in ones and twos in *Polk*, IA 9 Nov (SJD), *Dickinson*, IA 11 Nov (ET), and *Union*, IA 19 Nov (JG). A Eurasian Tree Sparrow was w. of its usual range at Hawk Pt., *Lincoln* 21 Oct and 19 Nov (JWE).

UNDOCUMENTED RARITIES

The following reports were received with no details, and have not yet been reported to the Missouri Bird Records Committee: a Eurasian Wigeon at Otter Slough C.A., *Stoddard*, MO 25 Nov; and 2 ad. Soras with 5 young at the Dexter-area rice fields, *Stoddard*, MO 2 Sep.

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