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Iowa & Missouri



Robert Cecil

The first ten days of December were frigid reminders of winter's potential for making us miserable and for driving typical lingering birds out of the Region, including waterfowl, gulls, and semi-hardy passerines. For Missouri, it was coldest such period in almost 30 years; in Iowa, it hit -19° F in Cedar Rapids on 7 December and produced subzero temperatures somewhere in the state during the first week and a half of the month. More seasonable temperatures then returned in the middle of the month, then warmed up considerably by the third week. Snowfall was widespread and light in Iowa; in Missouri, it was primarily limited to the northern and central parts of the state.

"Delightful January" seems an oxymoron, but delightful it was. Depending upon the calculation and the state, it was either the warmest or second warmest January ever recorded. Ice vanished throughout Missouri and well into Iowa, and the balmy temperatures lured small to moderate numbers of numerous opportunistic species northward. Waterfowl, gulls, Turkey Vultures, and some passerines reappeared in January and early February, in some cases making it to northern Iowa. January precipitation was below normal for the Region except for southeastern Iowa

and southeastern Missouri.

February temperatures were above normal for Missouri and a roller-coaster for Iowa, where temperatures were erratic but did produce the coldest day since 2001 with -26° F at Elkader. Many of the birds that ventured northward during January were squeezed out by the cold temperatures, but not for long, and most had reappeared by the end of the month. Precipitation was below normal throughout. Always of interest, winter finches were no-shows during the season: 5 Red Crossbills, 2 Common Redpolls, and a handful of Purple Finches and Pine Siskins made up the entire invasion—unless one counts Iowa's possible Brambling.

Abbreviations: R.M.B.S. (Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, *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); S.L. (Smithville L., *Clinton and Clay*, MO); W.L.D. (Winfield Lock and Dam *Lincoln*, MO).

GEESE THROUGH GROUSE

Like many waterfowl species this season, Greater White-fronted Geese were lured



Inca Dove, an increasing species in the Mississippi River Valley, was detected 8-28 (here 16) February 2006 at the Springfield Nature Center, Greene County, Missouri.

Photograph by Tommie Rogers.

northward during the Jan thaw, e.g., 400 on 15 Jan at Pool 19 in Iowa (CC, CE); the highest count was of 2730 on 27 Feb at S.C.N.W.R. (FD). Snow Goose numbers at

S.L.N.W.R. and S.C.N.W.R. were huge and pretty typical; less typically, 40,000 wintered at the latter location (TR). A rare dark-morph Ross's Goose was identified on 20 Feb in *Stoddard*, MO (BL, SDi). Cackling Geese made a good showing in Iowa, with 1200 on 25 Feb in *Worth* (†PH) and 200 in *Hamilton* (KW), and details were provided for small numbers s. to cen. Missouri, such as 50 on 23 Dec at R.M.B.S. (BR). Three *hrota* Brant at Pool 19, *Lee*, IA 14 Jan (†SD) would be one of about six records for the state. An actively growing Trumpeter Swan population included 135 on 15 Jan at R.M.B.S. (DR). Enigmatic was a Wood Duck in Mason City, IA 10 Jan (RG); migrants made it to *Lee*, IA 18 Feb (RC) and *Woodbury*, IA 20 Feb (GE). Small numbers of most other dabblers (apparently except Northern Shoveler) pushed into s. and cen. Iowa during the first half of Jan but departed with the return of cold temperatures in Feb; all had returned by the end of the period. Canvasbacks appeared in the usual large Dec numbers at Pool 19, while the next high count was of 357 at R.M.B.S. 26 Dec (JE). Of the other *Aythya*, Redheads were scarce; Ring-necked Ducks peaked at 750 on 4 Feb at S.L.N.W.R. (SK) and 108 on 5 Feb in *Union*, IA (SD, JG); and 419 Greater Scaup were on the Keokuk, IA C.B.C., with 100 at L. Jacomo, *Jackson* MO 7 Jan (BF). Sea ducks were scarce: a Black Scoter on the Keokuk C.B.C. 19 Dec., a White-winged Scoter at W.L.D., MO 1-3 Dec (DRo, JE, JU), and a total of 7 Long-tailed Ducks (five reports, all in Dec except for 2 birds at Pool 19 on 10-14 Jan; JF, JD). By far the most northerly mid-winter Hooded Mergansers were up to 4 in *Woodbury*, IA 1-3 Feb (BH, GE); the high count was 50 at S.L., MO 7 Jan (BF). As expected, the big concentrations of Common Mergansers were on the Iowa reservoirs: 8000 each at Rathbun 16 Dec (RLC) and at Red Rock 21 Jan (JG, JB, SD). Post-C.B.C. reports of Red-breasted Mergansers were also from Iowa: 3 on 14 Jan at Pool 19 (SD) and 2 migrants on 19 Feb in *Scott* (CC). There were 30 Greater Prairie-Chickens at Dunn

Ranch, Harrison, MO 24 Dec (SK), a usual location.

LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

A Common Loon was stranded on the ice at Saylorville Res. 16-19 Dec, providing both a rare C.B.C. report and a meal for a Bald Eagle 20 Dec (JD, SD, m.ob.); in Missouri, there were 10 at Stockton L., Cedar/Dade 21 Dec (MR) and one at Table Rock L. 11 Jan (DRi, CB, DB). Pied-billed Grebes returned to n. Missouri and s. Iowa by mid-Feb; Horned Grebes were not reported after 6 Dec. Two American White Pelicans wintered near Davenport, IA (SF), and migrants in Iowa appeared on 25 Feb, with 2 in Lee, IA (WO) and one in Scott, IA (DP). The latest Double-crested Cormorant was one in Des Moines, IA 10 Jan (JF).

Late Great Egrets were newsworthy in Missouri, with 5 in Lincoln 1 Dec (JE), one at S.C.N.W.R. 7 Dec (†TR), one at W.L.D. 3-11 Dec (†JU), one near S.L.N.W.R. 6 Dec (SK), one at Springfield 4 Jan (CB, †GS), and one at Otter Slough C.A., Butler/Stoddard 10 Jan (BB, BL). A Black-crowned Night-Heron remained at Cedar L. in Cedar Rapids, IA until 15 Dec, the 8th consecutive winter report for this species at this location (BS). There were 3 Black Vultures and 70 Turkey Vultures in St. Genevieve, MO 14 Jan (JE); a few Turkey Vultures ventured into the s. half of Iowa in early Feb. Northern Harriers had a good season, with peak counts of 20 going to roost in Livingston, MO 6 Feb (SK, LL) and 15 at Taberville Prairie, Barton, MO 21 Dec (MR).

Northern Goshawks were scarce; the only reports were of one in Scott, IA 7 Dec (KP, SP), one that struck a window in Polk, IA and went to the Iowa State University raptor rehabilitation center (SD), and one in Greene, MO 18 Feb (GS). Iowa's four Red-shouldered Hawk reports were all eastern. Rough-legged Hawks were numerous; 8 were seen hovering over a Liberal, MO field 28 Dec (JC, KB, AK). Golden Eagle numbers were normal, with Iowa reports from Polk, Marshall, Taylor, Grundy, and Warren and Missouri reports from Lincoln and Nodaway. The Merlin roost returned to Des Moines, with at least 6 there during the season (JG, RCe); there were 3 at Taberville Prairie, MO 21 Dec (MR) and about 20 other reports from throughout the season, mostly in Iowa. Prairie Falcon reports included 3 in Iowa and 9 at seven Missouri locations, with the most easterly at W.L.D., both 3 Dec and 8 Jan (ph., †JU) and at another Lincoln, MO location 22 Dec (SS).

RAILS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

The Columbia, MO S.T.P. near McBaine, Boone has become the place to find winter

rails: this year, there were 12 Virginias on the C.B.C. 17 Dec, plus a Sora 5 Feb (CM). A Sandhill Crane was in Union, IA 24 Dec (SD); another remained 14 Jan+ at Cedar Rapids, IA (BS, DP, CE). A few Killdeer pressed into s. Iowa in early Feb. Five Greater Yellowlegs at W.L.D. 3 Dec were unusually late (†JU). Least Sandpipers made Missouri appearances including 10 on 3 Dec and 4 on 22 Dec at W.L.D. (JU), one in Lincoln 10 Dec (JE), and one in Boone 31 Jan+ (SK, CM). Two American Woodcocks were window-killed 15 Dec in West Des Moines (DT); a few were displaying 22 Jan near St. Louis (JU). A California Gull on at Ft. Madison, Lee IA 2 Dec (p.a., †JF) would represent one of a handful of state records. Thayer's Gulls made it to R.M.B.S., with a first-winter bird and an ad. 16 & 17 Dec, respectively (JU, JE), a first-winter there 1 Jan (JE), plus an ad. at Smithville L., Clay,



This Townsend's Solitaire was a great find at Meramec Community College, St. Louis County, Missouri on 28 (here 31) December 2005. Photograph by Joshua Uffman.

MO 2 Feb+ (DW, †KM); Iowa had about 15 reports of the species, all from the Mississippi R. or the large reservoirs. There was a first-winter Iceland Gull at R.M.B.S. 20-29 Dec (JE), plus 4 in Iowa. Seven or more Lesser Black-backed Gulls were in St. Charles, MO (m.ob.), and 5 were in Iowa, 4 of those in Scott (SF). Among about 13 reports of Glaucous Gull, two were away from the Mississippi R. or the big Iowa reservoirs: one at L. Manawa, Pottawattamie, IA 1 Dec (LJR, BKP) and 2 or 3 during the season at Camp Branch Marina, Clay (KM, DW). Great Black-backed Gulls were reported only from Iowa: one on 2 Dec and another on 10 Jan at Pool 19 (JF), and up to 4 first-winter birds from late Dec+ in Scott (†SE, †JG, †DAK). A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake appeared 2-4 Dec at Saylorville Res. (ph. AB, †JG, †SD); presumably the same bird was at Red Rock Res. 10 Dec (ph., †SD).

A White-winged Dove made a brief appearance in a Dickinson, IA yard 31 Dec-1 Jan (†LS). Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their expansion in the Region, with high counts of 75 at St. Joseph, MO (LL) and 41 in

Lee, IA (CC, CE). An Inca Dove at the Springfield Nature Center, Greene 8-28 Feb provided Missouri's 4th record, its 2nd in two years (AD, ph. CB, m.ob.). The only Barn Owl was one found dead 28 Feb at S.C.N.W.R. (RB) Long-eared Owls were scarce in Missouri, with only two reports totaling 13 birds, while Short-eared Owls were well represented in both states. A Rufous Hummingbird again appeared in Missouri, this one spending the season in Farmington, St Francois (BL).

WOODPECKER THROUGH FINCHES

Red-headed Woodpeckers may be declining in the Region but not at S.L.N.W.R., where a record 289 were found the C.B.C. 28 Dec. The most northerly Loggerhead Shrike was at Rathbun Res. 21 Jan (RC), while the season's most southerly Northern Shrike was at St. Joseph, MO (LL); numbers of the latter were a little above average in Iowa. Black-billed Magpies were again found at Broken Kettle Grasslands, Plymouth, IA, with 5 on 31 Dec (†JB, JG). There was a Marsh Wren on the Keokuk, IA C.B.C. 19 Dec; 5 Sedge Wrens were late in Barton, MO 21 Dec (MR). Unusually late too was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Lee, IA 14 Jan (ph. SD). A Townsend's Solitaire at Kirkwood 28 Dec+ (AM) enlivened the St. Louis area birding scene; in Iowa, there were singles on the Taylor County C.B.C. 30 Dec and in O'Brien 21-22 Jan (DT †LS). There were two Gray Catbird reports after the C.B.C. period: in Lincoln, MO 8 Jan (†JU) and in Busch C.A., St. Charles, MO 26 Feb (DR). American Pipits were in Story, IA 1 Dec (WO) and on the Red Rock, IA C.B.C. 17 Dec; there were also 5 in Lincoln, MO 18 Dec (JU).

In Missouri, an Orange-crowned Warbler in St. Louis was a good mid-winter find 3-4 Jan (JU), and a whopping 788 Yellow-rumped Warblers were recorded on the Taney County C.B.C. 1 Jan. There were 8 Spotted Towhees reported from throughout the Region and the season. If confirmed, a report of Lark Bunting in Decatur, IA 19 Jan (†NM) would be a very unusual winter record. An unusually late Savannah Sparrow was found on New Year's Day in Worth, IA (†PH). Le Conte's Sparrows were found at two Missouri locations: 4 at Bradford Farms, Boone 21 Jan (BJ) and 3 on the Clarence Cannon C.B.C. 29 Dec. Lapland Longspurs made it to the St. Louis area, with 100 counted on both 11 Dec and on 1 Jan in St. Charles (JU) Smith's Longspurs in Missouri included one in Barton 21 Dec (MR) and 15 in Benton 11 Jan (AF). A Snow Bunting was in St. Charles, MO 18 Dec (JU). Unexpected was an Indigo Bunting in the Duck Creek C.A.,

Bollinger/Stoddard/Wayne, MO 8 Jan (BR). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was very late 21 Jan in Pocahontas, IA (†LAS). Brewer's Blackbirds were reported from three counts (Southeastern Webster County, Rathbun, and Shenandoah) in Iowa; in Missouri, there were 15 in St. Charles as late as 16 Dec (JU) and 3 in Buchanan the next day (LL, SK). The Region's most northerly wintering group, 50 Great-tailed Grackles were in Warren, IA (AJ). What could be Iowa's first Brambling was fuzzily photographed during its 1-21 Jan stay in Linn (ph. JH). Of Missouri's five reports of Purple Finch, all were in the north; Iowa had an average year. The only crossbill report was of 5 Reds at the Mt. Olivet Cemetery in St. Joseph

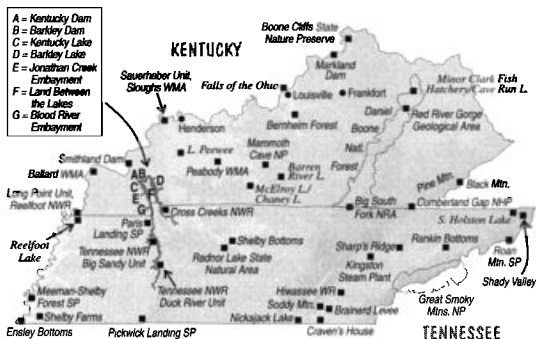
19 Dec (DW). Only 2 Common Redpolls were reported: one in Boone, MO 14 Dec (PM) and one on the Ames, IA C.B.C. 17 Dec. By far the most southerly Pine Siskins reported were 2 in Springfield, MO 2 Dec; the most by far were 40 at the Sheldon Cemetery, O'Brien 31 Dec (JB, JG).

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Tennessee & Kentucky



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Yellow-billed Loon, Inca Dove, continuing Broad-tailed Hummingbird and Black-throated Sparrow, and a Region-first Golden-crowned Sparrow. Kentucky's more modest list included a Varied Thrush, a Harris's Sparrow, and two Spotted Towhees. With natural and ornamental food crops in good supply, it was a good winter for berry, cone, and mast eaters, with American Robins present in above-average numbers and Blue Jays and Red-headed Woodpeckers back to more normal numbers.

Chris Sloan | Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr.

Like the autumn leading into it, the winter 2005–2006 season was overall warmer and drier than normal. Slightly colder-than-normal months of December and February were more than made up for by an extremely warm January. In fact, there were only two relatively short bouts of cold weather, the first immediately prior to Christmas, when the temperature dipped to 10° F at Louisville and 15° F at Nashville on the morning of 20 December, and a second in mid-February, when temperatures dipped to season lows of 7° F at Louisville and 12° F at Nashville on the morning of the 19th. Precipitation was average to below normal, with hardly any periods of snow cover and no significant snow events. In fact, at no time during the season did Louisville have more than three inches (7.6 cm) or did Nashville have more than a trace.

Rarity highlights during the season included a veritable smorgasbord in Tennessee:

Abbreviations: Kentucky Dam (n. end of Kentucky L., Livingston/Marshall, KY); Pace Pt. (Big Sandy Unit, Tennessee N.W.R., Henry, TN); Sauerheber (Sauerheber Unit Sloughs W.M.A., Henderson, KY); Standifer Gap (Standifer Gap Marsh, Hamilton, TN).

WATERFOWL

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck shot at Reelfoot L., TN 2 Jan (*vide* NM) added to the handful of Regional records and represents the first mid-winter record. The peak count of Snow Geese was 150,000 at Ballard W.M.A., KY 6 Feb (CW), a new Regional high. A bird that possessed the characters of a Greater White-fronted Goose × Snow (Blue) Goose hybrid was present at Long Point Unit,

Reelfoot N.W.R., Fulton, KY 2 Dec (BP, JD, NM). One to 46 Cackling Geese were reported at seven Kentucky and six Tennessee locales through the period. Mute Swans continue to increase in the Region, with some birds now appearing to exhibit winter site fidelity. In Kentucky, one to 25 birds were reported at 11 sites through the period. One at Bell's Bend, Davidson, TN 17 Dec (GC, PC) was the only report from Tennessee. The wintering flock of Tundra Swans at Sauerheber peaked at a new state-high count of 56 on 1 Feb (MM), with 5 still present there 27 Feb (MM). One to 2 birds were reported at two additional Kentucky locales in mid-Dec. In Tennessee, 2 immes. were at Hatchie N.W.R., Haywood 24

Dec–10 Jan (ph. JRW et al.), and 3 were in Dyer 23 Feb (AW).

Overall, numbers of dabbling ducks were unimpressive. A male Mallard × Gadwall hybrid at Sauerheber 15 Dec provided a first record of this combination for Kentucky (BP, DA). There were four reports of winter Blue-winged Teal in the Region: one in Fayette, TN 17 Dec (PD); one during the Reelfoot L. C.B.C.

(*vide* MG); one in Hawkins, TN 21 Dec (SHu); and a male at Cooley's Pond, Wayne, KY 7 Jan (ph. RD).

Except for Redheads, which were present in above-average numbers towards the end of the season, divers were not represented much better than dabblers. One to 13 Surf Scoters were



This very accommodating pair of Western Grebes lingered in various parts of the Big Sandy Unit of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge through the end of the season (here at Pace Point, Henry County, 7 January 2006). *Aechmophorus* grebes are very rare in the Tennessee & Kentucky region. Photograph by Mike Todd.