

# Iowa & Missouri



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While Iowans basked in the guilty pleasure of global warming during December, Missouri started the season under a foot of snow. Either way, it was still a balmy month, averaging about the 13th warmest on record. The first half of January remained warmer than usual, with the predictable effect on those species inclined to linger. January finished with more normal temperatures, but it hardly seemed normal—Missouri was hit with snow and a severe ice storm, while Iowa endured repeated snowfalls. February was an unpleasant con-



Two Harlequin Ducks spent the winter season (here 9 February 2007) through the season in Scott County, Iowa. Photograph by Reid Allen.

tinuation of late January. Iowa sunk into the deep freeze, and temperatures in northern Missouri hovered around zero. Compounding the misery were persistent snow and ice storms, such as the 23-26 February ice storm

that Iowa's climatologists declared the most destructive in 40 years. While most of the month hosted few birds and fewer birders, the intrepid and/or foolhardy braved ice and snow to chronicle the return of waterfowl during the middle of the month in Missouri and a few days later in Iowa. Overall, it was pretty much an average year for waterfowl, raptors, gulls, sparrows, and, unfortunately, winter finches, with noteworthy exceptions sprinkled throughout.

Abbreviations: R.M.B.S. (Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, St. Charles, MO); S.L.N.W.R. (Swan Lake N.W.R., Chariton, MO); S.C.N.W.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO).

## WATERFOWL

Greater White-fronted Geese stayed n. in good numbers as long as possible, e.g. 104 in Poweshiek, IA 11 Jan (MP) and 800 in St. Louis 15 Jan (JE), while Snow Geese reached 203,000 at S.C.N.W.R. 3 Jan and 300,000 at S.L.N.W.R. 26 Feb, both usual areas of concentration. A handful of single Ross's Geese departed Iowa by early Jan; Missouri had mid-winter reports of 2 at S.C.N.W.R. 10 Jan (TR) and 2 in Barton 11 Feb (LB, CB); returning were 28 at S.C.N.W.R. 27 Feb (TR). Cackling Geese remained in Iowa in Dec in good numbers, e.g. 531 at Rathbun Res., Appanoose 14

Dec (RLC), but Missouri only reported small numbers throughout the season. Canada Geese peaked at 12,275 at S.C.N.W.R. 3 Jan (FD). Mute Swans were scarce, although there were up to 7 in mid-Feb in Scott, IA (SF,



Iowa's third or fourth record of Gyrfalcon was seen by many in Boone County, Iowa on 28 January (here)—5 February 2007. Photograph by Reid Allen.

CC). Wintering Trumpeters continue to increase at R.M.B.S., with up to 175 this season (DRO); Tundras were confined to four Missouri locations, with the most being 7 at S.C.N.W.R. 10 Jan (TR).

Dabbling ducks followed the familiar pattern in the Region, with small numbers lingering where there was open water, and those being forced out by ice in late Jan. There then were virtually no reports of waterfowl until eager migrants trickled into Missouri on 12 Feb and Iowa a few days later. Diving ducks followed the same predictable pattern except for some Mississippi R. locations. At Pool 19, Lee, IA, Dinsmore recorded the following peak counts: 37,100 Canvasbacks and 2144 Ring-necked Ducks on the 18 Dec Keokuk C.B.C. and a remarkable 833 Greater Scaup 3 Feb. Canvasback numbers exceeded 1000 at R.M.B.S. 9 Dec (BR); other *Aythya* reports were of much smaller numbers. Getting birders moving despite the treacherous late-winter weather were 2 Harlequin Ducks 9 Feb+ at Lock and Dam 14, Scott (†SF, †CE, ph. RA, †PA, m.ob.). Scoters made their usual modest showing: single Surf Scoters at R.M.B.S. 26 Dec—27 Jan (†MT, m.ob.) and at Pool 19, Lee, IA 18 Dec and 20 Jan (SJD); single White-winged Scoters at Pool 13, Clinton, IA on 3 Dec (DP) and 3 Feb at Pool 19 on 18-19 Dec (SJD), plus 2 on 23 Dec in Union (SJD); and up to 3 Black Scoters at R.M.B.S. through 18

Jan (†JU, m.ob.) and 2 at Pool 19 on 18-19 Dec, declining to one 20 Jan (SJD). Long-tailed Ducks appeared in above-average numbers in Iowa, with peaks of 4 in Red Rock Res. 22 Dec (SJD, AB) and 8 at Pool 19 on 20 Jan (SJD); there were up to 4 in Missouri, all in its n. half. Unexpected was a Barrow's Goldeneye at a Decatur, IA farm pond 11 Jan (†NM, †BB, †JL). Common Merganser concentrations in Iowa included 14,000 at Red Rock Res. 13 Dec (AB) and 5300 at Saylorville Res. 17 Dec (SJD). Unusual were mid-winter Red-breasted Merganser reports from Iowa, including one in Story 7 Jan (WO), 2 in Decatur 1-12 Jan (JRL, NJM, BBa), 4 in Polk on 14 Jan and 7 at Pool 19 on 3 Feb (SJD); and 4 at R.M.B.S. 22 Jan (JE).

## LOONS THROUGH GULLS

A Common Loon was late at Thomas Hill Res., Randolph 5 Jan (BJ, AF). There were 140 Horned Grebes at Stockton Res., Dade, MO 23 Dec (MR); early was one at Cedar L., Linn, IA 26-27 Feb (DP, BS). Other late grebe reports included a Red-necked at Red Rock Res. 5 Dec (ph. JF) and a Western at Fellow's L., Greene, MO 11 Feb (LB, GS, CB). Continuing a trend, American White Pelicans are trying to winter in Iowa, e.g., 2 at Ottumwa 20 Jan (SJD), one at Iowa City 24 Jan (JLF), and 3 at Lock and Dam 19 on 3 Feb (SJD). Continuing a Missouri trend of winter Great Egrets, one was noteworthy on 21 Jan at Otter Slough C.A., Stoddard (JE). In Iowa, Black-crowned Night-Herons did not return to Cedar L., ending the streak at eight consecutive years. Uncharacteristically, Iowa Cooper's Hawk reports outnumbered Sharp-shinned by 3 to 1; Northern Goshawk, with five Iowa reports, appeared in typical numbers, but none made it to Missouri. Buteos had a normal year, and 5 Golden Eagles, all from Iowa, was also normal. A Boone, IA Gyrfalcon (ph. RIA, †PIA, †JB, †GW) brought out birders 28 Jan-5 Feb and generated discussions about its provenance; it was accepted unanimously by the B.R.C. Prairie Falcons made five Iowa and seven Missouri appearances; the most easterly by far was at Columbia Bottoms C.A., St. Louis 7 Jan (BR). At least 7 Merlins returned to their winter roost at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines (JG, RC), and numbers elsewhere were impressive: 11 from Missouri and 17 from Iowa in all.

The winter rail hotspot continues to be the Columbia, MO, S.T.P. near McBaine, Boone,

with 7 Virginias and 2 Soras there 16 Dec (JE). There were 7 Sandhill Cranes on at S.C.N.W.R. 6 Dec (TR); unusual were mid-winter reports from n. Iowa, including one in Cherokee 2 Jan (DB), one in Floyd 13 Jan (JG, SJD), and 5 in O'Brien 2-23 Feb (fide DK, LS). Interesting shorebird reports from Missouri included 2 Least Sandpipers at Winfield Slough, Lincoln 10 Dec (JE), a Baird's Sandpiper at Big Lake S.P., Holt, MO 14 Dec (ph., †BJ, a 2nd state record in winter), and a Dunlin at Otter Slough C.A., Stoddard 21 Jan (JE). An ad. Franklin's Gull was reported at R.M.B.S. 27 Jan and 13 Feb (DaR), while Bonaparte's Gulls peaked at 365 at Stockton Res., MO (MR). In addition to the Franklin's Gull report, R.M.B.S. hosted the rest of Missouri's best gull reports, including at least 2 Thayer's Gulls (JU, BR), at least 4 Iceland Gulls (BR, JE, MT), at least 4 Lesser



A Western Tanager at St. Louis on 21-28 (here 26) January 2007 brightened the Missouri winter. Photograph by Mike Thelen.

Black-backed Gulls (JE, JU, BR), 2 Glaucous Gulls (JE, DR, JU), and 3 Great Black-backed Gulls (JE, BR). In Iowa, ad. Thayer's Gulls outnumbered first-year birds by 16 to 7; only a few birds in other plumages were reported. An Iceland Gull at Lock and Dam 15 on 16 Jan+ (SF) was an excellent find, as was a juv. on 3 Feb at Lock and Dam 19 (SJD) Lesser Black-backed Gulls peaked at 6 at Saylorville Res. 6 Jan (SJD, JG) and 3 during the season at Scott (SF, DoR). Exceptional was Iowa's 2nd Slaty-backed Gull, an ad. at Lake Manawa S.P. 17-23 Dec (LP, BP, ph. AB, ph. JG, ph., †AJ). Adding some additional spice was a juv. Black-legged Kittiwake at Saylorville Res. 1 Dec-14 Jan (ph., †JG, AB, SJD, m.ob.).

## DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their expansion in both states, and in Iowa they set a

new C.B.C. record. Among four Missouri reports of Greater Roadrunner, the most northeasterly was one in Wright 26 Dec (SM). Missouri reports of Barn Owl included singles in Barton 3 Jan and Newton 20 Jan (LH). Snowy Owls made it to nw. Missouri, with one in Livingston 7 Dec (DRi) and another in Andrew 12 Dec (FD); Iowa had 11 additional reports from throughout the season. Long-eared and Short-eared Owls appeared in about average numbers in Missouri and above-average numbers in Iowa. Northern Saw-whet Owls made it to ne. Missouri, with 2 at North Sever C.A., Knox 27 Feb (PHa, EW); Iowa had 11 reports. Missouri continued its string of wintering hummingbirds, with individuals present through the season: an imm or female Rufous Hummingbird in Cape Girardeau (ph., †LC, BE) and single Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirds at Rolla, Phelps (ph., †GM, †NY) and through the season in Iron, MO (†NY).

Iowa's first Red-breasted Sapsucker was completely unexpected on 4 Dec near Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie (ph. AP). There were 4 Loggerhead Shrikes in s. Iowa during the season, while Northern Shrikes visited in about normal numbers, including one in Holt, MO 14 Dec (BJ) and another in Clay, MO 26 Feb (BF). Black-billed Magpie numbers may be growing at Broken Kettle Grassland, Plymouth, IA, where there were 7 on 6 Jan (GV, PR). Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared in small numbers in both states, with an exception being 15 in Polk, IA 1 Dec (DT). A lingering Sedge Wren was at Prairie S.P., Barton 23

Dec (MR), and Marsh Wrens were reported from the Red Rock Res. and Sioux City, IA C.B.C.s. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were also found on two Iowa counts: Saylorville Res. and Taylor. Townsend's Solitaires, recently upgraded to Regular status in Iowa, were represented by 4 individuals: 2-23 Jan in Decatur (†NM, †BB, †JL), 6-28 Jan in O'Brien (LS), 11-20 Jan at Hawkeye W.A., Johnson (DP, CE, CC), and 31 Jan in Allamakee (DK). American Robins were found in large numbers throughout Iowa and were reported in record numbers from its C.B.C.s; Iowa also hosted 2 Varied Thrushes: 6-28 Feb in Mason City (PH, CF) and 27-28 Feb in Sioux City (BH, PR). Unusual mimid reports included a Gray Catbird at Lake of Three Fires S.P., Taylor, IA 30 Dec, where one was found last year (KN), Northern Mockingbirds in n. Iowa—e.g., 2 in Cherokee 12 Dec-28 Jan



A notable rarity in Iowa was this Hoary Redpoll 16 December 2006 through 26 (here 6) January 2007 at the Brenton Arboretum in Story County. Photograph by John Bissell.

(LS) and one in Howard 12 Jan (EB)—and a wintering Brown Thrasher at Ames, IA (*fide* SJD). American Pipits made three Missouri appearances, including 16 Dec in Greene (BoB), 3 Jan in Barton (LH, CB), and 21 Jan at R.M.B.S. (DR).

### WARBLERS THROUGH SISKINS

Pine Warblers were in two s. Missouri locations: in Joplin 5 Jan (LH) and at Cape Girardeau 15-28 Feb (SJ); more unusual was an Ovenbird on the Cedar Falls–Waterloo, IA C.B.C., the state's 3rd winter report in four years. Brightening up a Missouri winter was a Western Tanager in St. Louis 21-28 Jan (ph., †PM, †CM, †JM, m.ob.). Spotted Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow appeared in their usual small numbers in both states. Missouri's 2nd winter season Lark Bunting in the past three years was in Stoddard 17 Jan–8 Feb (BL, †BR, BJ, JE). There were four reports totaling 6 Le Conte's Sparrows in s. Missouri. Lapland Longspurs reached their highest numbers in Missouri at 1000 on 17 Feb in St. Louis (DRo). Smith's Longspurs were noted 2 Dec in Clay, MO (BF) and 26 Feb at S.L.N.W.F. (SK). Snow Buntings made a poor showing overall; the most southerly was one at R.M.B.S. 2 Dec (JE). Unprecedented was Iowa's first winter Indigo Bunting, an imm. male at Ames 31 Dec (ph., †Sma, ph. SJD). Interesting were 12 Brewer's Blackbirds (just one a female) in Decatur, IA 19 Jan–4 Feb (BB). There were 20 Great-tailed Grackles in Warren, IA 15 Feb (AJ), down from recent years' counts. A first-year Baltimore Oriole feeding on peanut butter and suet was a surprise in Jefferson, MO 19 Jan+ (†WG).

The most Purple Finches by far were 40 in Boone, MO from Dec–Feb (BJ), among a handful of other reports; Iowa had 15 reports, almost all of one to 4 birds. The only crossbill

reports were of Reds: 4 at Busch Memorial C.A., St. Charles 15-16 Dec (JU, JE), one on the Taylor, IA C.B.C., and 4 at Cedar Rapids, IA 4 Jan (BS). A Common Redpoll appeared in s.-cen. Missouri in Maries 15-23 Jan (AN); there were five other reports of one to 3 birds in the Region. A Hoary Redpoll greatly increased visits to Brenton Arboretum in Story, IA 16 Dec–26 Jan (†TL, ph., †RIA, †PIA, m.ob.). Pine Siskins were found only at six Iowa locations. A Eurasian Tree Sparrow in Washington, IA 16 Jan (DP) marks a westerly movement for this species in Iowa.

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