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T. C. Stephens

Wm. Youngworth

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Late Fall and Winter Birds Records, for 1941 to 1947, in the Upper Missouri Valley

BY T. C. STEPHENS AND WM. YOUNG WORTH

The present paper is the ninth contribution in a series of reports* on the winter bird life in a section of the Upper Missouri Valley, with particular emphasis on the area contiguous to Sioux City, Iowa. The area includes parts of three states (Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska). The time covered by the nine reports is now thirty years.

As in earlier papers the annual period covered is from November 1 to March 1—four months. But in a few cases we have included interesting records just outside of these limits. The area included is not well defined, for we have accepted records as they have come, without being restrained by an arbitrary boundary.

In nomenclature we have followed the latest Check-List (1931) of the American Ornithologists' Union, and the Nineteenth Supplement (1944) and the Twentieth Supplement (1945). Since many of our records depend upon field identification, we have avoided trinomial names, except where the race which occurs in North America is a subspecies which is related to a subspecies occurring elsewhere. In such cases the chance of finding a subspecies other than the one credited to this continent is so slight that perhaps no harm is done in using the full trinomial name. The area which we are treating is a transition ground for the eastern and western races of several species. In such cases we use only the binomial term. Where specimens have been taken and expertly determined we make the facts known in the annotations.

We are greatly indebted to a number of local bird students for kindly placing their records at our disposal. In such cases credit is given in the appropriate paragraphs. Except where otherwise stated the locality is to be understood as Woodbury County, Iowa.

The present list contains 86 species, of which 70 are annotated. There are a number of species which occur as winter residents in this region with quite uniform regularity and abundance. Their status has been fully presented in previous literature, so that they need not be included in the body of the present paper. They are:

*Bird records during the past winter, 1916-1917, in northwestern Iowa. T. C. Stephens. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XXIV, 1917, pp. 245-258.

Bird records of the past winter, 1917-1918, in the Upper Missouri Valley. T. C. Stephens. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XXV, 1918, pp. 71-84.

Bird records of the past two winters, 1918-1920, in the Upper Missouri Valley. T. C. Stephens. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XXVII, 1920, pp. 395-407.

Bird records of the past two winters, 1920-1922, in the Upper Missouri Valley. T. C. Stephens. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XXXVII, 1930, pp. 357-366.

Winter bird records, 1922 to 1926, in northwestern Iowa. Chas. J. Spiker. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., 1926, XXXIII, pp. 307-313.

Late fall and winter bird records, 1926-1930, in the Upper Missouri Valley. Wm. Youngworth. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XXXVIII, 1931, pp. 277-285.

Late fall and winter bird records, 1930-1938, in the Upper Missouri Valley. Wilfred D. Crabb. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., 1938, XLV, pp. 289-297.

Late fall and winter bird records, 1938-1941, in the Sioux City area. Jean Laf-foon. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., XLVIII, 1941, pp. 425-436.

Ring-necked Pheasant. *Phasianus colchicus*.
 Rock Dove. *Columba livia*.
 Screech Owl. *Otus asio*.
 Horned Owl. *Bubo virginianus*.
 Flicker. *Colaptes auratus*.
 Hairy Woodpecker. *Dryobates villosus*.
 Downy Woodpecker. *Dryobates pubescens*.
 Horned Lark. *Otocoris alpestris*.
 Crow. *Corvus brachyrhynchos*.
 Chickadee. *Parus atricapillus*.
 White-breasted Nuthatch. *Sitta carolinensis*.
 Brown Creeper. *Certhia familiaris*.
 English Sparrow. *Passer domesticus*.
 Goldfinch. *Spinus tristis*.
 Slate-colored Junco. *Junco hyemalis*.
 Tree Sparrow. *Spizella arborea*.

White Pelican. *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. The earliest fall arrival date was September 14, 1941—a flock of 500. During late October and early November a White Pelican was seen daily on Half Moon Lake in Sioux City—probably an injured bird.

Black-crowned Night Heron. *Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli*. One bird was seen on the Floyd River in Sioux City on October 15, 1946—a late fall record.

Canada Goose. *Branta canadensis*. This species was seen almost daily in Charles Mix County, S. D., during November and up to December 14, 1946. The flocks often contained several hundreds of birds.

Snow Goose. *Chen hyperborea*.

Blue Goose. *Chen caerulescens*. Mixed flocks of these two geese were seen at different times during late October, 1946, in Charles Mix County and Bon Homme County, S. D.

Mallard. *Anas platyrhynchos*. Flocks of thousands of these ducks were seen almost daily on and around Lake Andes in Charles Mix County, S. D., during November and up to December 14, 1946.

Gadwall. *Chaulelasmus streperus*. This species was seen in small numbers during 1946 in Charles Mix County, S. D.

Baldpate. *Mareca americana*. This species was seen in small numbers during November, 1946, in Charles Mix County, S. D.

American Pintail. *Anas acuta tztzihoa*. This was the most common duck in Charles Mix and Bon Homme Counties, S. D., during November and early December, 1946. Flocks of many thousands were often seen.

Shoveller. *Spatula clypeata*. A single individual was seen on the Big Sioux River near Riverside on December 18, 1946, and was included in the Christmas bird census.

American Merganser. *Mergus merganser americanus*. A lone bird of this species was seen on Half Moon Lake, in Sioux City, on several occasions during the first two weeks of November, 1946. It was also reported in the Christmas bird census of 1941, at Sioux City.

Sharp-shinned Hawk. *Accipiter striatus velox*. Observed in Woodbury County, Iowa, on February 9, 1947, and on February 14, 1947 (W.Y.).

Cooper's Hawk. *Accipiter cooperii*. Often a late fall straggler. One was seen on November 2, 1946, in Bon Homme County, S. D.

Red-tailed Hawk. *Buteo jamaicensis* subsp. A fairly common winter resident. It is not unusual to see from six to eight on a field trip. Six were seen at and near the Preparation Canyon State Park, in Monona County, Iowa, on January 24, 1947. Three others were seen in Cherokee County, Iowa, on January 6, 1947. This species is observed every year when one goes into the open country here.

American Rough-legged Hawk. *Buteo lagopus s. johannis*. This is probably almost as common a winter bird in this area as the Marsh Hawk. It was seen on January 6, 1947, in Lyon County, and on January 21, 1947, in Monona County, Iowa.

Ferruginous Rough-leg. *Buteo regalis*. A very rare migrant in the Sioux City area. One fine individual was seen on November 2, 1946, near Lake Andes, Charles Mix County, S. D.

Golden Eagle. *Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*. This species has become very rare in the last fifteen years. One was noted at Sioux City on October 25, 1946. On January 24, 1947, one was seen near the Preparation Canyon State Park, in Monona County, Iowa. It was being harried by a flock of crows. The birds were up several hundred feet, and occasionally the eagle would fold his wings and make a plummet-like dive at one of his tormentors. The crows seemed to be always able to avoid this stoop, and would resume their attack.

Marsh Hawk. *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*. The Marsh Hawk seems to have become one of our common winter hawks. On December 8, 1946, seven of these hawks were seen in the course of a day's hunt in Bon Homme County, S. D. The greatest number seen on any recent field trip was seventeen on January 25, 1947, during a 270-mile trip from Sioux City to Holdrege, Phelps County, Nebr. Nearly all of these birds were adult males.

Prairie Falcon. *Falco mexicanus*. Though a fairly regular winter visitor this bird may be regarded as rare. The junior author has made up two winter specimens taken at Sioux City in past years. On November 2, 1946, three of these falcons were seen in Charles Mix County, S. D. One was seen to take a stoop attack on a flying pheasant hen, but without scattering any feathers, however. On December 8, 1946, two falcons were seen in Bon Homme County, S. D. On January 23, 1947, one was seen near Salix, Woodbury County, Iowa. Another was seen within the city limits of Sioux City, along the Floyd River, on March 3, 1947 (W.Y.).

Duck Hawk. *Falco peregrinus anatum*. This is a rare bird in these parts, so that an occurrence on any date should be reported. One was seen on September 26, 1945, and another on September 3, 1946, at Sioux City.

Pigeon Hawk. *Falco columbarius* subsp. One was seen in Woodbury County, Iowa, on September 29, October 5, 8, and 15, 1946. Two were seen in Charles Mix County, S. D., on November 2, 1946. On February 21, 1947, Mr. Carl Wellhausen saw a Pigeon Hawk on the West Side of Sioux City. He noted especially the light gray color of the back and head. It seems to be quite likely, therefore, that this individual was *Falco c. richardsonni*. Mr. Wellhausen saw birds of precisely the same pattern between March 1 and 10, 1943, near Akron, Plymouth County, Iowa, and near Anthon, Woodbury County, Iowa.

Sparrow Hawk. *Falco sparverius* subsp. During the last few years there have been numerous winter records of this bird. Six of them were seen on January 8, 1947, and three others were seen near Moorhad, Iowa, on January 24, 1947. It was also recorded on January 25, 1941, and January 9 and 12, 1946.

Greater Prairie Chicken. *Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*. No individuals of this species have been seen in Woodbury County, Iowa, by the writers since 1935. A few have been seen in Lyon County during the hunting seasons of the last five years. A few were also seen in South Dakota during the hunting season of 1946.

European Partridge. *Perdix perdix*. This species is a permanent resident throughout northwestern Iowa, and the greater portions of South and North Dakota.

Bob-white. *Colinus virginianus*. Quail have been seen in about the usual numbers during the past six years. A covey of about twenty-five birds was seen near Grant Center, Monona County, Iowa, on January 23, 1947.

American Coot. *Fulica americana*. The Coot often remains late in the fall in this region. During the early part of November, 1946, thousands of coots were observed on Lake Andes, in Charles Mix County, S. D.

Killdeer. *Charadrius vociferus*. This species takes a rather late departure, usually remaining until the first week in November.

Golden Plover. *Pluvialis dominica*. For the past fifteen years the junior author has recorded this plover in the fall migration, and often in flocks of several scores. Most of these records were in late October; but on November 19, 1944, he saw a single Golden Plover near George, in Lyon County, Iowa.

Ring-billed Gull. *Larus delawarensis*. A flock of about a dozen were seen migrating as late as October 28, 1946.

Franklin's Gull. *Larus pipixcan*. Hundreds were seen migrating on October 27 and 28, 1946.

Mourning Dove. *Zenaidura macroura*. We often flush these doves while hunting pheasants in November and December, and sometimes they get into the Christmas census. A recent note was for a single individual in Plymouth County, Ia., on January 9, 1946.

Snowy Owl. *Nyctea scandia*. On November 19, 1945, a wounded

Snowy Owl was captured by Conservation Officer W. W. Trusell close to the Missouri River southwest of Sergeant Bluff, in Woodbury County, Iowa. This bird died and was mounted by the museum staff of the Iowa Department of History and Archives in Des Moines. (See: Dickcissel, VII, No. 2, 1945; and Iowa Bird Life, XVI, June, 1946, p. 37).

Barred Owl. *Strix varia*. Reported in the 1944 Christmas bird census for Sioux City.

Short-eared Owl. *Asio flammeus*. Hawks and owls have suffered heavily from the hunter's gun during the last fifteen years. The Short-eared Owl seems to flush almost always within gunshot. Once it was a regular winter resident; now we are lucky to see one or two during a winter. On January 25, 1947, the junior author watched two of these owls hunting for food inside the boundaries of the Naval Depot, near Hastings, Adams County, Nebr. In 1944 four were included in the Christmas census by Wm. Youngworth.

Saw-whet Owl. *Cryptoglaux acadica*. Mr. B. O. Wolden reported a Saw-whet Owl in Emmet County, Iowa, late in April, 1942. The same individual was found dead on May 23. (See: Iowa Bird Life, XII, Dec., 1942, p. 59). Another Saw-whet Owl was under observation for some time by several people near the mouth of the Big Sioux River on November 21, 1943. (See: Iowa Bird Life, XIV, Sept., 1944, pp. 45-47).

Belted Kingfisher. *Megaceryle alcyon*. This species was reported in the Christmas bird census for 1941 and 1945.

Red-shafted Flicker. *Colaptes cafer collaris*. We grade this species as an uncommon winter visitor in this region. Recent records are: January 6, 1947, at Westfield, Plymouth County, Iowa; and on January 23, 1947, at Grant Center, Monona County, Iowa. These birds are often hybrids.

Red-bellied Woodpecker. *Centurus carolinus* subsp. Not common, but a fairly regular winter resident. Karl Kuhlman saw individuals of this species in Riverside, Sioux City, in February, 1944, and in October, 1946. The Twentieth A.O.U. Check-List (1945) admits a new subspecies, *C. c. zebra*, which covers the "Mississippi Valley east to Ohio."

Red-headed Woodpecker. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. This bird remains throughout the winter locally where the food is adequate and when the weather is not too severe. The one known place in the vicinity of Sioux City where this species has been found as a winter resident with some regularity, is Riverside Park. However, no records for the winter of 1946-1947 have come to our attention. In Riverside Park there is an abundance of acorns, but this is true practically everywhere throughout this region. It may be significant that the very old "Council Oak" tree in this Park is also a bee tree. The combs of honey are visible on the outside of the tree, and the interior must be full also. This honey must support a large number

of bees throughout the winter, which may in turn account for the winter colony of Redheads, numbering as high as twenty in some winter seasons. The junior author collected one specimen on December 26, 1932, at Blyburg Lake, in Dakota County, Nebr.

Blue Jay. *Cyanocitta cristata bromia*. A very regular winter resident, though in much less numbers than during the breeding season. Blue Jays came to the feeding trays in various parts of the city during the winter of 1946-1947. At the home of Miss Gladys Palmer, on the West Side of town, they took the food which had been put out for the Cardinals, which may have had something to do with the absence of the latter birds most of the time. On the other side of town, in Morningside, Mrs. E. E. Sulsberger had both Blue Jays and Cardinals throughout the winter, but they visited the food trays at different times of the day.

American Magpie. *Pica pica hudsonia*. Reported in the Christmas bird census for 1942 and 1943.

Crow. *Corvus brachyrhynchos*. The Crow has been very common in recent years. Thousands of them roost in the timber along the Missouri River above and below Sioux City.

Tufted Titmouse. *Parus bicolor*. This species can hardly be rated as more than rare in this region, in any season of the year. In former years there have been small local aggregations of them along the Little Sioux River, especially in Monona County, Iowa; and they seemed to have obtained a foothold in Union County, S. D. With the exception of one record on October 15, 1939, in Sioux City, we have no recent records.

Red-breasted Nuthatch. *Sitta canadensis*. This species has been regarded as a rare winter visitor. Yet during the winter of 1946-1947 we have received an unusual number of reports of these birds, visiting feeding stations in Sioux City. It was reported in the Christmas bird census for 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, and 1945. Mr. Carl Wellhausen saw one near his home in the West Side of the city on December 10, 1945. Miss Zell C. Lee had one at her feeding station on Douglas Street on March 3, 1946.

Robin. *Turdus migratorius*. A few Robins remain through the winter, probably every year. One Robin was seen on Second Street, Sioux City, on January 31, 1947. Mr. A. R. Toothacher saw a flock of seven Robins on two occasions in late January and early March of 1946.

Bluebird. *Siala sialis*. Small flocks occasionally winter in this area. The Stone Park area and the bottomlands along the Missouri River are favored localities; and lone individuals are frequently noted in the city. Karl Kuhlman saw two Bluebirds in Stone Park on January 12, 1944.

Golden-crowned Kinglet. *Regulus satrapa*. The 1946 fall migration of this species was the heaviest and most prolonged in twenty

years. The arrival was on October 15, and they were present from that time to December 31, and seen or heard almost daily.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet. *Regulus calendula*. This kinglet was also a plentiful migrant in the fall of 1946, with the arrival date of September 7. It was also seen almost daily throughout September and most of October.

Cedar Waxwing. *Bombycilla cedrorum*. A flock of 25-30 Cedar Waxwings visited Morningside in March, 1946, and were seen feeding on high-bush cranberries by Mrs. C. F. Berkstresser.

Starling. *Sturnus vulgaris*. These birds have increased tremendously in the last ten years, and hundreds can be seen on any extensive field trip in the Upper Missouri Valley. They have increased to such an extent that they now move about during the winter in large flocks. Flocks of 200-300 birds have been seen many times in northwest Iowa counties. On January 1, 1938, a flock of Starlings estimated at approximately 500 were seen in Hansen's Woods along the Missouri River (B. Stiles and T.C.S.). On January 25, 1947, the junior author saw a flock of nearly one thousand Starlings near Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebr. Miss Zell C. Lee saw 150 Starlings on February 22, 1947, on a trip to Vermillion and Yankton, S. D.

Myrtle Warbler. *Dendroica coronata*. This species is often a late migrant, for a warbler. The following late records are almost excluded by our arbitrary time period, but may be mentioned: October 24, 1930; October 30, 1939; October 25, 1946; all in Sioux City.

Mourning Warbler. *Oporornis philadelphia*. A male Mourning Warbler in full male plumage was seen near George, Lyon County, Iowa, on November 19, 1944. This bird was followed for several hundred feet along a fence-row, and was observed to be uninjured. Mild weather up to that date was probably the explanation of its presence so late. (See Iowa Bird Life, 1945, p. 13).

Western Meadowlark. *Sturnella neglecta*. The Meadowlark is not a common winter resident, but field trips of any length will usually reveal a few. In January, 1946, Mr. A. R. Toothacher saw seven Meadowlarks a few miles east of Sheldon, O'Brien County, Iowa. On December 22, 1946, the junior author made a 70-mile field trip and saw ten Meadowlarks en route. On January 6, 1947, he made a 250-mile trip through Lyon, Osceola, Sioux, Clay, and other northwestern Iowa counties, especially to observe what effect, if any, the cold weather (20-30 degree below zero) was having on bird life, where the snow was light and plenty of food was available on the partly bare ground. Eight Meadowlarks were found, as well as Crows, Starlings, and pheasants, fifteen species altogether. No dead birds were seen, and the Meadowlarks seemed to be quite active after the cold snap. Eastern and southern Nebraska was found to be quite a wintering ground for Meadowlarks, and several dozens were seen on January 25, 1947, en route from Sioux City to Holdrege, Nebr., with the greatest abundance in the Hastings area.

Red-winged Blackbird. *Agelaius phoeniceus* subsp. Redwings were common throughout November and early December, 1946, in Charles Mix and Bon Homme Counties, S. D. On January 22, 1946, Miss Edna Brower saw a flock of 25-50 Redwings in a garden adjoining the Riverview Schoolhouse.

Rusty Blackbird. *Euphagus carolinus*. These birds are usually present in small flocks until late in the fall. They were seen at Sioux City on November 19, 1944, and in Bon Homme County, S. D., on December 8, 1946.

Bronzed Grackle. *Quiscalus versicolor*. The grackles often remain late, and a few may be found throughout the winter. October and November records are numerous.

Cowbird. *Molothrus ater* subsp. Occasionally found in late October and early November. Observed in Woodbury County, Iowa, on October 28, 1946.

Cardinal. *Richmondena cardinalis*. Resident throughout the year. In the winter of 1946-1947 a pair of Cardinals regularly visited the feeding station maintained by Mrs. E. E. Sulsberger in Morningside. At times a third bird (a male) also came with the other two.

Purple Finch. *Carpodacus purpureus*. An uncommon and more or less irregular winter visitor. It was seen by the junior author on November 3 and December 9, 1930. A lone male in fine plumage visited Miss Gladys Palmer's feeding Station on the West Side of the city on January 12, 1947, and returned almost daily until after March 1.

Redpoll. *Acanthis flammea* subsp. A rather irregular winter visitor. Recent records are: a small flock in Charles Mix County, S. D., on December 8, 1946; a flock of about twenty near Melvin, Osceola County, Iowa, on January 6, 1947; a small flock near Moorhead, Monona County, Iowa, on January 24, 1947.

Pine Siskin. *Spinus pinus*. These birds occurred in considerable numbers during the winter of 1945-1946, especially in January and February. On February 24, 1946, between 150 and 200 were observed by Miss Gertrude Weaver and Miss Zell C. Lee in Logan Park Cemetery, where there are numerous pine trees. Dr. and Mrs. A. L. Rautman observed numbers of Pine Siskins with Red Crossbills in Logan Park Cemetery on March 4 and 11, 1945. (See: Dickcissel, June, 1945, p. 7). In 1942 they were seen almost daily from March 1 to the end of the month. Four were seen by Wm. Youngworth on February 14 and 15, 1947.

Red Crossbill. *Loxia curvirostra*. We assume that *benti* is the race most likely to occur here. A small flock of Red Crossbills were observed on various dates from March 4-11, 1945, by Dr. and Mrs. A. L. Rautman and other members of the Bird Club in Logan Park Cemetery. (See: Dickcissel, VI, June, 1945, p. 7).

Arctic Towhee. *Pipilo maculatus*. This towhee is an uncommon winter visitor. The junior author observed several individuals on

October 8, 1931, in Union County, S. D.; and on October 11 and 14, 1932. These records inadvertently escaped earlier publication.

Savannah Sparrow. *Passerculus sandwichensis* subsp. Several of these sparrows were observed by the junior author in Bon Homme County, S. D., on October 28, 1946.

Vesper Sparrow. *Poocetes gramineus* subsp. This species is included on the strength of several October records, one on October 28, 1946, in Bon Homme County, S. D.

White-winged Junco. *Junco aikeni*. While on a hunting trip near Lake Andes, in Charles Mix County, S. D., on November 2, 1946, the junior author disturbed a flock of juncos, and discovered a lone White-winged Junco among them. The bird was flushed at least three times. The observer was familiar with this species in the Black Hills of South Dakota and in the Laramie Mountains of Wyoming. Winter records of this bird in eastern Nebraska are also existent.

Harris's Sparrow. *Zonotrichia querula*. This sparrow is a very common migrant through this area, often tarrying quite late, and rarely remaining throughout the winter. Individuals were observed in Woodbury County, Iowa, on the following dates: November 5 and 7, 1939; October 10, 1941; October 10, 1942; November 19, 1944; and on October 15, 18, 19, 20, and 28, 1946, in Bon Homme County, S. D. Miss Zell C. Lee saw two on February 22, 1947, in Cedar County, Nebraska.

Lincoln's Sparrow. *Melospiza lincolni*. This is also very often a late fall migrant. We have dozens of records in late October and early November, the latest being November 7, 1926, and November 5, 1928; and numerous other October records in later years.

Song Sparrow. *Melospiza melodia* subsp. We assume that *juddi* is the subspecies most likely to be found in this area, since we have taken a specimen which has been thus identified. Over a period of twenty years the junior author has obtained numerous October, November, and December records of this species. Three records which escaped previous publication are: November 5 and 27, and December 10, 1939.

Lapland Longspur. *Calcarius lapponicus*. This species comes down from the north with more or less regularity in the winter months, and usually in flocks of considerable size. While hunting in Charles Mix County, S. D., during November and December, 1946, flocks of hundreds, or possibly thousands, of these birds were seen. They are usually quite common in the Missouri Valley below Sioux City, but during the winter of 1946-1947 they have not been noted here. A large series of these birds has been taken in the hope of finding a few Smith's Longspurs, but without success so far. Between twenty-five and fifty longspurs were seen by Miss Zell C. Lee on February 22, 1947, on a trip to Vermillion and Yankton, S. D.

SIoux CITY, IOWA.