

1953

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### Recommended Citation

Weston, Henry G. Jr. (1953) "Notes on the Occurrence of Birds During the Spring Periods of 1948-1950, in Northern Emmet County, Iowa," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 60(1), 759-763.

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## Notes on the Occurrence of Birds During the Spring Periods of 1948-1950, in Northern Emmet County, Iowa

By HENRY G. WESTON, JR.

Bird students are usually only vaguely aware of the orderly sequence of arrival dates of migrants and summer-residents in a given area. They know merely that certain species may be expected to appear at certain times each year. If data are compiled and presented in either tabular or graphical form, it becomes possible to evaluate year-to-year differences within one species and to make comparison between species.

During the winter-spring-summer periods of 1947-1948, 1948-1949 and 1949-1950, the author gathered data on the occurrence of birds in northern Emmet County, Iowa. Although data were gathered from February through July of 1948 and January through May of 1949 and 1950, this paper, for convenience, includes only the spring periods following March 1. For data gathered prior to March 1 and a description of the study area, see Weston (1952). One-hundred and thirty-one days were spent in the field during March to July period of 1948, 81 and 68 during 1949 and 1950 respectively.

General weather conditions in northern Emmet County during the period covered by this paper showed considerable variation (Table 1). The spring periods of 1948 and 1949 resembled each

**Table 1**  
Mean and departure from normal temperature and precipitation for  
Estherville, Emmet County, Iowa (U. S. Weather Bureau, 1948-1950).

Year and month	Aver. mean temp. (F.)	Degrees departure from normal	Total precip. (in.)	Precip. departure from normal
1948:				
Mar.	29.0	-2.3	0.80	-0.34
Apr.	51.2	+4.2	3.19	+0.82
May	57.5	-0.2	4.13	+0.11
1949:				
Mar.	31.0	-0.3	2.74	+1.40
Apr.	47.7	+0.7	1.19	-1.18
May	62.3	+4.6	3.55	-0.47
1950:				
Mar.	26.8	-4.5	1.35	+0.01
Apr.	38.6	-8.4	1.49	-0.88
May	57.1	-0.6	3.83	-0.19

other in being generally moderate and were characterized, with a few exceptions, by normal 50-70 degrees F. temperatures. During April 1950, five to fifteen degree (F), below normal temperatures and a 0.88 inch deficiency of precipitation occurred. This had the effect of delaying the arrival of normal spring weather from ten days to two weeks. The last snow, one inch, fell on April 29.

The method utilized in gathering data on the occurrence of birds consisted primarily of recording observations of species made incidentally to the field study of the Ring-necked Pheasants of the area. Data have been summarized here in several tables; Table 2, the last-seen dates for six winter visitants, Table 3, eight species observed only once during the three years, and Table 4, a comparison of the observed spring arrival dates for 79 species. Resident species regularly observed while in the field in northern Emmet County included the following:

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| European Partridge        | Eastern Crow            |
| Ring-necked Pheasant      | Black-capped Chickadee  |
| Horned Owl                | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| Eastern Hairy Woodpecker  | Starling                |
| Northern Downy Woodpecker | English Sparrow         |
| Horned Lark               | Eastern Cardinal        |
| Northern Blue Jay         |                         |

**Table 2**

Comparison of last-seen dates for six winter visitants in northern Emmet County, Iowa, during the spring periods of 1948, 1949 and 1950.

Winter Visitant	Date Last Seen		
	1948	1949	1950
American Rough-legged Hawk	Apr. 20	Apr. 26	May 10
Short-eared Owl	Mar. 22	Mar. 8	May 8
Slate-colored Junco	Apr. 25	May 5	Apr. 28
Tree Sparrow	Apr. 20	Apr. 26	May 1
Lapland Longspur	Apr. 15	Apr. 7	Apr. 12
Snow Bunting	....*	....*	Mar. 14

\*Species not recorded in the area.

**Table 3**

Species observed only once in northern Emmet County, Iowa, during the spring periods of 1948, 1949 and 1950.

Species	Date Observed	Number Seen
Bald Eagle	Mar. 24, 1950	1
Western Burrowing Owl	Apr. 21, 1949	1
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	May 23, 1950	2
Arkansas Kingbird	May 26, 1949	1
Bewick's Wren	Mar. 31, 1950	1
Cape May Warbler	May 21, 1950	1
Orchard Oriole	May 26, 1949	1
Eastern Mockingbird	May 26, 1950	1

It is hoped that this article will stimulate other students to record data on migration in a form more usable today. Many amateur ornithologists have such data buried in field notes. Presenting these data as I have done here will enable others to benefit from them and will call attention to problems which field observers can help to solve.

**Table 4**

Comparison of observed arrival dates for 79 birds in northern Emmet County, Iowa, during the spring periods of 1948, 1949 and 1950.

Species	Date First Observed		
	1948	1949	1950
Pied-billed Grebe	Apr. 4	Apr. 10	Apr. 10
Black-crowned Night Heron	Apr. 20	Apr. 26	Apr. 28
American Bittern	Apr. 18	Apr. 29	May 4
Common Canada Goose	Mar. 16	Mar. 20	Mar. 7
Lesser Snow Goose	Mar. 18	Mar. 23	Mar. 24
Blue Goose	Mar. 18	Mar. 23	Mar. 24
Common Mallard	Mar. 16	Mar. 20	Mar. 7
Gadwall	Mar. 18	Mar. 24	Apr. 3
Baldpate	Mar. 24	Mar. 25	Apr. 3
American Pintail	Mar. 18	Mar. 20	Mar. 7
Green-winged Teal	Mar. 24	Mar. 24	Apr. 3
Blue-winged Teal	Mar. 24	Apr. 4	Mar. 25
Shoveller	Mar. 20	Mar. 24	Apr. 2
Redhead	Mar. 23	Mar. 25	Mar. 25
Canvas-back	Mar. 23	Mar. 30	Apr. 1
Lesser Scaup Duck	Mar. 18	Mar. 20	Mar. 25
American Golden-eye	Mar. 20	Mar. 24	Apr. 1
Buffle-head	Mar. 23	Mar. 25	Mar. 29
Ruddy Duck	Apr. 12	Apr. 10	Apr. 12
American Merganser	Mar. 20	Mar. 24	Apr. 2
Eastern Red-tailed Hawk	Mar. 25	Apr. 4	Mar. 31
Marsh Hawk	Mar. 8	Mar. 5	Mar. 6
Osprey	Apr. 30	Apr. 30	Apr. 24
Eastern Sparrow Hawk	Mar. 18	Mar. 8	Mar. 20
American Coot	Mar. 19	Mar. 23	Apr. 3
Killdeer	Mar. 18	Mar. 23	Mar. 27
American Golden Plover	May 8	May 6	May 15
Wilson's Snipe	Apr. 15	Apr. 14	Apr. 11
Upland Plover	Apr. 18	Apr. 23	Apr. 10
Greater Yellow-legs	Apr. 6	Apr. 4	Apr. 14
Lesser Yellow-legs	Apr. 10	Apr. 20	Apr. 14
Ring-billed Gull	Apr. 10	Mar. 26	Mar. 24
Franklin's Gull	Apr. 10	Mar. 23	Apr. 17
Black Tern	May 6	May 11	May 7
Mourning Dove	Apr. 1	Apr. 3*	Apr. 5

**Table 4 (Continued)**

Comparison of observed arrival dates for 79 birds in northern Emmet County, Iowa, during the spring periods of 1948, 1949 and 1950.

	Date First Observed		
	1948	1949	1950
Eastern Nighthawk	May 24	May 28	May 22
Chimney Swift	May 19	Apr. 29	May 4
Eastern Belted Kingfisher	Apr. 19	Apr. 4	Apr. 10
Northern Flicker	Mar. 8*	Mar. 15*	Mar. 3
Red-headed Woodpecker	May 1	May 3	May 8
Eastern Kingbird	May 5	May 4	May 12
Tree Swallow	Apr. 11	Apr. 23	Apr. 28
Rough-winged Swallow	Apr. 29	May 4	May 5
Barn Swallow	May 1	May 3	May 4
Purple Martin	May 11	May 15	May 14
Western House Wren	May 6	May 16	May 12
Eastern Winter Wren	May 2	May 7	May 12
Catbird	May 10	May 14	May 12
Brown Thrasher	Apr. 20	Apr. 30	May 3
Eastern Robin	Mar. 18	Mar. 21	Mar. 7
Eastern Hermit Thrush	Apr. 7	Apr. 9	Apr. 10
Eastern Bluebird	Apr. 13	Apr. 5	Mar. 27
Migrant Shrike	Apr. 11	Mar. 28	Apr. 4
Eastern Yellow Warbler	May 11	May 6	May 11
Myrtle Warbler	May 1	Apr. 30	May 3
Western Palm Warbler	May 11	Apr. 30	May 3
Louisiana Water-thrush	May 24	May 14	May 20
Northern Yellow-throat	May 17	May 2	May 11
Bobolink	May 14	May 10	May 5
Meadowlark	Mar. 10	Mar. 14*	Mar. 7*
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Apr. 12	Apr. 20	Apr. 25
Giant Redwing	Mar. 8	Mar. 5*	Mar. 6
Baltimore Oriole	May 14	May 10	May 19
Brewer's Blackbird	Mar. 21	Apr. 1	Mar. 27
Bronzed Grackle	Mar. 21	Mar. 23	Mar. 27
Eastern Cowbird	Mar. 21	Apr. 1	Mar. 27
Dickcissel	May 23	May 9	May 15
Eastern Goldfinch	May 12	May 6	May 22
Red-eyed Towhee	May 1	May 8	May 4
Savannah Sparrow	Apr. 15	Apr. 13	Apr. 21
Western Grasshopper Sparrow	Apr. 25	May 3	May 4
Slate-colored Junco	Mar. 15	Mar. 26*	Mar. 7
Eastern Chipping Sparrow	Apr. 29	May 8	May 4
Clay-colored Sparrow	May 2	May 4	May 12
White-throated Sparrow	Apr. 24	Apr. 26	May 4
Eastern Fox Sparrow	Apr. 1	Apr. 3	Apr. 13
Lincoln's Sparrow	May 7	May 4	May 8
Mississippi Song Sparrow	Mar. 24	Mar. 26	Apr. 5

\*Individuals seen during previous winter.

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