

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 February 2010

Birding on Fort Drum has been extremely slow this winter, much more so than the previous few winters. Unlike the past few years, there has been no significant irruption of northern birds, particularly of finches, and most irruptive species have been entirely absent this winter. Winter raptor numbers are also relatively low, as there are very few Rough-legged Hawks on Fort Drum this winter, and Snowy Owl has not been seen at all. Add to this the scarcity of “half hardies”—species that mostly migrate south for the winter but sometimes stick around in very small numbers—and there aren’t many birds to see.

As is typical during the winter on Fort Drum, most water bodies are completely frozen over, and waterfowl are scarce. Small numbers of American Black Ducks persist, and can sometimes be seen on Pleasant Creek downstream from Remington Pond and other open stretches of moving water. Mallards appear to be scarce, although there have been one or two seen with the Black Ducks in January. No other duck species has been observed on Fort Drum since December.

The grassland and other open communities throughout the western Training Areas sometimes support good numbers of wintering raptors, but hawk numbers are low for the third consecutive winter. A typical drive along the length of Antwerp Road is turning up 1-2 each Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, and no Northern Harriers or American Kestrels have been seen since early December. The Rough-legged Hawks tend to cover fairly large areas, but often a dark-phase individual is in TA 12B and a light-phase bird is often near the intersection of Antwerp and Dogwood Roads. Several Bald Eagles have been observed on Fort Drum, including an adult that flew over the Cantonment Area on 7 January and sightings of both adults and immatures from the northern Training Areas. On February 9 an immature Northern Goshawk was seen flying over Antwerp Road about a mile north of Dogwood Road. Somewhat surprisingly, not a single Sharp-shinned or Cooper’s Hawk has been seen on Fort Drum yet this year, although perhaps this isn’t so surprising after all given the relative scarcity of other birds on the installation.

Northern Shrike numbers seem slightly lower than usual, but several individuals have been seen fairly reliably over the past 5-6 weeks. Perhaps the most reliable location this winter has been along Antwerp Road just west of the intersection between this Road and U.S. Military Highway. Other shrikes have been seen in TA13A along Antwerp Road (at least two individuals), at the north end of Carr Road in TA 17D, in TA12A along the boundary of Fort Drum just north of Black Creek; and along the Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield fence line along the Main Tank Trail.

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No notable passerines have been observed this winter. Irruptive finches and waxwings have been entirely absent, and in fact the only finch species recorded on Fort Drum so far in 2010 has been American Goldfinch. There have been a few recent Snow Bunting sightings, but numbers are much lower than they were in December, and the same applies to Horned Lark as well. Even resident species such as Black-capped Chickadee have seemed relatively scarce in recent weeks. Fortunately, the first signs of spring migration should appear during the next 3-4 weeks. Until then, the birding is likely to remain very slow.



Northern Shrike in Training Area 13A.

Species observed on Fort Drum 1 January through 11 February:

American Black Duck	Horned Lark
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
Ruffed Grouse	Brown Creeper
Wild Turkey	White-breasted Nuthatch
Bald Eagle	European Starling
Northern Goshawk	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	American Tree Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk	Snow Bunting
Mourning Dove	American Goldfinch
Rock Pigeon	House Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	
Downy Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Pileated Woodpecker	
Northern Shrike	
Blue Jay	
American Crow	
Common Raven	