



Ruddy Turnstone: first Illinois CBC record

By Carolyn Marsh,
Calumet City-Sand Ridge Compiler

The bi-state Calumet City-Sand Ridge Christmas Bird Count held 29 December 2007 produced an extraordinary result, a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). The shorebird was observed at the Whiting Refinery Beach in Whiting, Indiana on the shore of Lake Michigan. It was seen at the break of day by Carolyn Marsh and John Kendall.

The bird was first discovered on 25 November 2007 at the Hammond Bird Sanctuary beach and it surprisingly stayed in the area until Count Day, 29 December and beyond when it was last seen on 23 January 2008. It was also with a Dunlin on 26 December during Count Week.

The Ruddy Turnstone spent most days on the Whiting Refinery Beach among gulls and mallards. It was seen eating dead fish and leftovers from gulls and probing seaweeds and turning over rocks and shells with its strong and slightly upturned upper mandible.

The turnstone probably survived snowstorms, with the lowest temperature of -1° F below zero on 19 January 2008, because of the refinery warm water discharge pipe at the beach. The beach is isolated and recessed in an artificially created basin that shelters it from inclement weather.

The Ruddy Turnstone breeds in high-arctic Canada and Greenland. It is a regular fall migrant through-

The Ruddy Turnstone above was seen during the Calumet City - Sand Ridge Christmas Bird Count on 29 December 2007. Photo by John Kendall.

out the Midwest, but sightings and numbers have been declining in past years in both Illinois and Indiana. This is also a record late fall-winter migration date for Illinois and Indiana. This species is typically documented on the west and east coasts during the annual Christmas Bird Count period.

It is likely based on the following data that at least two Ruddy Turnstones were on the lakefront during the Christmas Bird Count period and beyond.

25 November 2007 –

Alternate plumage
Hammond Bird Sanctuary,
Hammond, Indiana
John Cassady, Carolyn A. Marsh
and Jeff McCoy

02 December 2007 – with Dunlin

Rainbow Beach, Chicago, Illinois
Robert D. Hughes

06 December 2007 –

Alternate plumage
Whiting Refinery Beach,
Whiting, Indiana
Carolyn A. Marsh

10 December 2007 –

Alternate plumage
with American Pipit and Killdeer
Whiting Refinery Beach, Indiana
Carolyn A. Marsh

15 and 19 December 2007 –

Alternate plumage
Waukegan Harbor Beach, Illinois
Bob Erickson, Al Stokie
and David Wiechers

21 December 2007 – Basic plumage

Hammond Bird Sanctuary, Indiana
Carolyn A. Marsh

22 December 2007 – Basic plumage

Hammond Bird Sanctuary, Indiana
Susan Bagby, Kenneth J. Brock,
John Cassady and Randy Pals

22 December 2007 –

Alternate plumage
Waukegan Harbor Beach,
Waukegan, Illinois
David Wiechers

25 December 2007 – with Dunlin

Whihala County Park,
Hammond, Indiana
Robert D. Hughes

26 December 2007 – Count Week –

Basic adult plumage with Dunlin
Whihala County Park,
Hammond, Indiana
Michael Topp

Whiting Refinery Beach,
Whiting, Indiana with Dunlin
Carolyn A. Marsh.

The Ruddy Turnstone and Dunlin became separated and each was also seen alone by John Kendall and Patty Topp.

29 December 2007 – Count Day –

Basic adult plumage
Whiting Refinery Beach,
Whiting, Indiana
John Kendall and Carolyn A. Marsh

30 December 2007 through

23 January 2008 –
Basic adult plumage
Whiting Refinery Beach,
Whiting, Indiana
Many observers

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