

# The 1995 Illinois Christmas Bird Count

by David B. Johnson and Alan F. Stokie

Three major cold fronts beginning in early November pushed many birds, particularly waterbirds, out of Illinois before the 1995 Christmas Bird Count period (16 Dec. 1995 through 2 Jan. 1996). Snow covered most of northeastern Illinois and temperatures were near normal. Eighty-seven percent of the counts had frozen water; only large bodies of water such as Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River remained open.

The mean low temperature was 25 degrees F; the mean high was 37 degrees F. Some observers said the early cold weather concentrated birds at minimal open water areas and feeding stations while others thought the cold weather forced out the waterbirds and less hardy landbirds.

The 1995 CBC data encompass both scenarios; waterbirds were recorded in fewer numbers than the record-breaking numbers of the 1994 CBC season (Johnson and Stokie 1995) while rarities were driven to feeders and nurseries at least in northern Illinois. The 1995 CBC season will also be remembered as the best winter invasion of Northern Shrikes, even surpassing the 1994 CBC season.

Observers set 9 new all-time state high counts (and tied 2) for indi-



viduals recorded within a count circle. Results from 60 counts included 147 species (13 species less than the 1994 CBC season). No count recorded more than 100 species but Rend Lake which had over 100 species for the past three years recorded the highest species total of 98; in fact, Rend Lake was the only count to record 90 or more species. Only 10 other counts recorded 80 or more species. Rend Lake also had the highest number of individuals, 2,108,814. Fermilab-

*Townsend's Solitaire. 24 Nov. 1995. Lyons Woods Forest Preserve, Lake Co. This bird was recorded on the Christmas Bird Count. Photo by David B. Johnson*

Batavia once again took top honors for fielding the highest number of observers in the state, 88. (See Table 1, page 97).

## Regularly Occurring Species

Only two Common Loons were reported, one at Morris-Wilmington, (see photograph in Field Notes section of this issue) and one at Bird Haven. Pied-billed Grebe numbers seemed above average, 162 in 18 count circles, including the impressive count of 25 individuals at Morris-Wilmington. In contrast, only 12 Horned Grebes in 3 count circles were recorded. Great Blue Herons are being recorded in higher numbers, 1029 individuals in 48 count circles (see histogram). Except for the high count of Mute Swans at Calumet City-Sand Ridge, observers counted hardly any swan species. No Tundra Swans were recorded and Clinton Lake had the only re-introduced Trumpeter Swans. Several compilers mentioned all-time high counts for Canada Geese with 19,867 and 31,586 individuals recorded at Barrington and Fermilab-Batavia, respectively. While most waterfowl were low in numbers, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye,