

Lake and Pere Marquette. A Brewer's Blackbird was at Mermet Lake.

One of the most interesting lingerers was a **Baltimore Oriole** (in IA) at Davenport.

Finally, the agony of the **bird that did NOT count** on this year's CBC was the bird two miles outside of Leon Hendrickson's Collinsville circle, a male **Rufous Hummingbird** that wintered in Illinois.

Regularly Occurring Species

Great Blue Herons were recorded in unusually high numbers. Observers reported 1,165 individuals in 52 count circles, perhaps reflecting on the expanding breeding colonies in both Illinois and to the north (see histogram). Burgeoning Canada Geese defy imagination and are becoming a nuisance in suburbia. Observers counted record numbers of 22,517 and 12,451 individuals at Barrington and Rockford respectively, mirroring an increasing population statewide. Fifty-seven Oldsquaws (in five circles with Carlyle Lake being the southernmost) seems troublesome as this species used to winter in greater numbers on Lake Michigan. Evanston was the only count with 44 individuals at the lakefront.

No Gray Partridge records were noted this year.

Starved Rock had a record 24 Bald Eagles in northern Illinois. Birders recorded 1,053 Bald Eagles in Illinois and the Iowa counts included here. These numbers are lower than last year's (see histogram) perhaps indicating the species was wintering farther north due to the warmer weather.

Several compilers commented that some owls were sparse while others like Great Horned, Eastern-Screech, Barred, and Short-eared



Orange-crowned Warbler. Des Plaines Conservation Area, Will Co. 30 Dec. 1997. This bird was seen on the Morris-Wilmington Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

Owls were relatively common. In the sparse department were 21 Long-eared Owls recorded in 12 count circles and only four Northern Saw-whet Owls statewide, two at Middle Fork River Valley and one each at Thorn Creek/Park Forest and Clinton Lake. Birders counted 1,141 Red-headed Woodpeckers (a bird of special concern) in 50 count circles. This number is higher than the 640 counted in 48 circles last year. The 684 Red-breasted Nuthatches in 57 count circles represents the second highest state total in at least 10 years (see histogram). How, if at all, does this correlate to this year's winter finch invasion? Was it due to a cone crop failure farther north?

Only 9 Northern Shrikes were recorded this year (in seven circles). Fifty-one Loggerhead Shrikes were counted in 15 circles, two in central and the rest in southern Illinois.

Irruptive Species

The winter finches! They were best represented by 1,810 Pine Siskins (in 40 count circles); 118 Common Redpolls (in 9 count circles, none in southern Illinois); 97 White-winged Crossbills (in 5 count circles) with Springfield having 13 birds, the farthest south in the state; and only 11

Red Crossbills statewide including 4 at Kishwaukee, 1 at Chautauqua, 5 at Mustcatine, and 1 at Princeton/Cordova. The *creme de la creme* winter finch find goes to the well-described pair of **Pine Grosbeaks** at McHenry. Evening Grosbeaks, however, were conspicuously absent.

High Counts

Twelve new all-time state high counts were set and one was tied for an individual species total recorded within a count circle. Observers recorded **78 Pied-billed Grebes** at Rend Lake, **181 Great Blue Herons** at Carlyle Lake, **7**

Trumpeter Swans at Crane Lake/Sangamon (some of which were unbanded or uncollared), **3,852 Ring-necked Ducks** and **93 Hermit Thrushes** at Cypress Creek, and **5 Pectoral Sandpipers** at Meredosia Island. An amazing tally of **38 Short-eared Owls** was recorded at Newton (a new count circle). Horseshoe Lake, however, captured four all-time high counts of: **10 House Wrens**, **4,500 American Robins**, **62 American Pipits** and **1,500 White-throated Sparrows**. Union County had a record **203 Eastern Bluebirds** and **83 Hermit Thrushes**. Crab Orchard NWR, once again, recorded **5 Pine Warblers**. The **998 Lapland Longspurs** at Middle Fork River Valley was a significant high count for central Illinois.

Documentation of Rarities

No reliable evidence exists for wintering Ospreys in Illinois. Two reports on this year's CBC were unconvincing to the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee. Birders must be aware that "white-bellied" Bald Eagles can often be confusing at a distance, especially those individual eagles that have dark in the nearly all-white head, appearing as if there's a dark eye-stripe. Hard