



*Eastern Screech-Owl. Jackson County Christmas Bird Count. 1 January 2000. Photo by Rhonda S. Monroe.*

*Northern Saw-whet Owl. Champaign Christmas Bird Count. 18 December 1999. Photo by Helen M. Parker.*



65 are very high numbers for north and central Illinois; the rest of the state's circles in southern Illinois also recorded good numbers (1197 in 33 circles). Both White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows were well-represented statewide and in smaller numbers Field, Savannah, and Fox Sparrows were recorded on many counts. The House Finch's early wintering populations in Illinois (5,808 in 58 circles, see histogram) has stabilized. Purple Finch, in contrast, may be in trouble. Only 506 were recorded statewide in 41 circles, and one has to wonder if some of these were misidentified House Finches.

### **Irruptive Species**

Red-breasted Nuthatches were in good numbers: 598 in 50 circles (see histogram); the nuthatch influx seemed to correspond with the influx of White-winged Crossbills, another spruce cone feeder. This was a Northern Shrike invasion year—40 individuals in 19 count circles, none in southern Illinois (see separate article on the winter invasion of Northern Shrikes). Winter finches teased observers with widely scattered reports: most remarkable were the four Evening Grosbeaks at Champaign, a species with "drought status" recently in Illinois. Quincy was the farthest south that Common Redpolls occurred with two individuals. Thirty-one at Peoria was a good count for the Illinois River Valley. The 17 White-winged Crossbills at Bloomington was noteworthy as were 18 at Springfield; elsewhere Evanston had three and Lisle, 16. Red Crossbills were at Chautauqua NWR (12) and Meredosia had 15 during count week. Pine Siskins had a good showing (808 on 24 counts); remarkable were the 250 siskin at Clinton Lake and most northern counts had good numbers.

### **High Counts**

Twenty all-time state high counts were set for an individual species total recorded within a count circle. **1,597** Double-crested Cormorants and **4** Greater Yellowlegs were tallied at Rend Lake; **188** Great Blue Herons were at Horseshoe Lake. Pere Marquette Park tallied some record waterbird numbers with: **20** Ross's Geese, **1,755** Ruddy Ducks, and **67** Common Snipe. Union recorded a grand total of **900** Greater White-fronted Geese.