

Bald Eagle numbers continue to soar for the Illinois Christmas Bird Count. This photo was taken in March 2006 along the Mississippi River by Emil Martinec.



Northern Pintail (6,080 in 29 circles) were mentioned by several compilers as being in high count numbers. There was a good sprinkling of Canvasback (925 in 30 circles) and Redhead (297 in 19 circles) throughout the state though in small numbers. Decatur recorded a Harlequin Duck – always rare inland. The only scoter noted was a Black at Clinton Lake. A few Long-tailed Ducks (17 in 5 circles) were sprinkled around the state with 3 at Rend Lake and one at Union being rather far south. Hooded Mergansers (1,871 in 34 circles) were reported in good numbers. Ring-necked Pheasants (414 in 34 circles) and Northern Bobwhite (379 in 26 circles) were noted as being in low numbers whereas Wild Turkeys (1,726 in 47 circles) are being detected in often remarkable numbers. Rend Lake noted the only Common Loon and Eared Grebe. Davenport (1), Carlyle Lake (7), and Pere Marquette (153) detected the only American White Pelicans. Great Blue Herons (1,283 in 55 circles) were ubiquitous and often in high counts whereas Black-crown Night-Herons (22 in 3 circles) were confined to Chicago's canal zones. Meredosia Island (1) and Pere Marquette (1) recorded the only Great Egrets. Black Vultures (295 in 7 circles), as always, were confined to southern Illinois. The northernmost Turkey Vultures were two detected at Kankakee.

Diurnal raptors through gulls

Eagles (3,281 in 47 circles) continue to be detected in record high numbers. Northern Harriers (532 in 51 circles) were widespread this season and often reported in high count numbers by several compilers. Cooper's Hawks (393 in 61 circles) continue their increase and presence statewide. Northern Goshawks are conspicuous by their near absence with Champaign (1), Crane Lake – Sangamon (1), and Jackson (1) noting the only individuals statewide. Red-shouldered Hawks (166 in 26 circles) were sparse in northern and central Illinois but were easily detected in southern Illinois (153 in 17 southern Illinois circles). The Harlan's form of Red-tailed Hawk was reported from Pere Marquette(1) and Collinsville (1). The only Golden Eagle report was from Pere Marquette (1). Thirteen Merlins (in 13 circles) were noted statewide. For the 5th out of 6 seasons a Merlin has returned to winter at a Chicago urban cemetery. No Peregrine Falcons were detected in southern Illinois and Champaign (1) noted the only central Illinois Peregrine Falcon; Davenport (2), Lisle Arboretum (3), Chicago Urban (1) and Chicago Lakefront (1) tallied the remaining Peregrines in northern Illinois. Lisle Arboretum noted the only Virginia Rail. Rend Lake (2) and Thorn Creek (1) noted the only Sandhill Cranes. Rend Lake