

nois river valleys should be on the lookout to further document this species' apparent expansion.

## Rarities

The top rarity was Waukegan's **Townsend's Solitaire** (see seasonal highlights in this issue) and Kishwaukee's count period solitaire (see *Meadowlark* 5:2 for details) both appearing at old nurseries converted into forest preserves. A close second goes to McHenry's **Varied Thrush** at a Crystal Lake feeding station (see seasonal highlights in this issue). Four American White Pelicans were at Pere Marquette. A Great Egret was recorded at Horseshoe Lake; solitary Ross' Geese appeared at Rend Lake and Pere Marquette; a Harlequin Duck was in the surf off Lake Michigan at Evanston; Merlins were at Rockford, Springfield, Middle Fork River Valley, and Warbluff Valley. Immature Black-legged Kittiwakes were at Evanston and Clinton Lake. The only Snowy Owl report was at Chicago Urban. Three Sandhill Cranes at Cypress Creek were noteworthy as were McHenry's 68 count week birds. Joliet had the only Virginia Rail and the only American Woodcock was at Middle Fork River Valley. Calumet City-Sand Ridge had the only Great Black-backed Gull plus 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Chicago Lakefront also recorded 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A Carlyle Lake Lesser Black-backed Gull was recorded, a rarity in southern Illinois. Five Eastern Phoebe were recorded, all in southern Illinois at Jackson, Crab Orchard, Union, and Horseshoe Lake. One Fish Crow was at Warbluff Valley; a Bohemian Waxwing (in Iowa) was at Muscatine and a count week bird was at Kishwaukee. An amazing 55 American Pipits (a new high count) were at Horseshoe Lake. Spotted Towhees were tallied at Morris-Wilmington and Horseshoe Lake.

Unusual warblers included an

Orange-crowned at Rend Lake, a Palm at Chicago Urban and solitary Pines at Crab Orchard and Rend Lake. A Brewer's Blackbird was documented at Decatur. Three immature Indigo Buntings were at Horseshoe Lake.



*The Northern Shrike staged an invasion this winter and was recorded on 19 Christmas Bird Count circles. This individual was photographed on 11 Feb. 1996 at Lyons Woods Forest Preserve, Lake Co. by Eric Walters.*

The only Le Conte's Sparrows were at Rend Lake (2), Jackson (1), and Cypress Creek (2). The only Vesper Sparrow was at Chicago Urban and single Harris' Sparrows were recorded at Fermilab-Batavia and Horseshoe Lake.

## High Counts

All-time high state counts were 181 Mute Swans at Calumet City-Sand Ridge. An all-time high count of 14 Cooper's Hawks was recorded at Fermilab-Batavia. Bald Eagle numbers were at record levels wintering along Illinois' rivers with a new 10-year high of 1870 individuals recorded for the state (see histogram). Thirty-four percent of the known aged Bald Eagles reported were immatures indicating a healthy young population wintering in Illinois. Chicago Lakefront recorded 4 Peregrine Falcons.

Waukegan counters once again tied their Thayer's Gull count of 7 birds. Kishwaukee recorded 3 Northern Saw-whet Owls. Western Mercer's 92,068 American Crows was an impressive all-time high tally. Rockford's 110 Brown Creepers set a record. The aforementioned 55 American Pipits at Horseshoe Lake set a record. Waukegan's 8 Northern Shrikes was an impressive tally and a record. Rend Lake's 310,800 Brown-headed Cowbirds set a single circle high count (as if we needed this high count).

## Irruptive Species

The best irruptive species for the second consecutive year was the Northern Shrike with 54 individuals in 19 count circles (plus 6 shrike sp.). Many compilers reported all-time high counts for Northern Shrike in their circles. Irruptive winter finches were best represented by the Pine Siskin, 1711 (in 45 count circles) and Common Redpoll, 184 (in 22 count circles, none in southern Illinois) recorded for the state. Evening Grosbeaks were tallied at Evanston (1), Andulusia-Buffalo (1), Humiston Woods (3) and Rend Lake (2) plus 2 count week birds at Clinton Lake for a rather paltry showing. Crossbill species were conspicuously absent.

## Deletions

One of the unpleasant duties of the Christmas Bird Counts editors is the deletion of rare or out-of-season species for which there are no convincing details. Two Eastern Wood-Pewees were dropped from this year's CBC because no details were provided. This species has never been recorded on an Illinois CBC and is in the tropics long before the CBC period.

The Brewer's Blackbird continues to present difficult field identification problems on CBCs. Two Brewer's Blackbird records from this season were not accepted by the seven-member Illinois Ornithological