

along the Illinois River. Green Island/Lost Mound had 35 Tundra Swans on the Mississippi River. Greater White-fronted (7,402 in 16 circles) and Ross's Geese (188 in 10 circles) are being recorded in greater numbers. Greater Scaup are lingering longer on Lake Michigan -Evanston and Waukegan recorded large rafts of 10,071 birds plus 4,175 scaup species. This increase in scaup may be due, in part, to the zebra mussel explosion. Most unusual were the inland scoter records: a Surf at Newton and Mermet Lake, 3 White-winged at Mermet, a Black at Kishwaukee, and two White-winged at Princeton-Camanche IA and Davenport IA on the Mississippi River. All three scoters were at both Evanston (North Shore) and Waukegan on Lake Michigan. Long-tailed Ducks at Carlyle (3), Clinton (1), Davenport (2), Pere Marquette (1) and Rend Lake (1) were unusual inland records. Lake Michigan's numbers of wintering Long-tailed are diminishing (4 at Evanston; 11 at Waukegan). Hooded Mergansers (1,622 in 37 circles) were noted in increased numbers by several compilers.

Diurnal raptors through gulls

Bald Eagles (1,922 in 43 circles) are definitely on the upswing, and six circles noted all-time highs for their respective counts. Solitary Golden Eagles were at Fermilab-Batavia and Chautauqua and Jackson and Union counties. This eagle is regular in southern Illinois around the goose refuges and more unusual in the rest of the state. Northern Harriers (549 in 49 circles) were widespread. Northern Goshawk singletons were at Joliet and Forest Glen. This was a Rough-legged Hawk (156 in 47 circles) year. Single Merlins were noted on six counts. Twelve Peregrines on seven counts indicate a more regular occurrence of this species in our

state in early winter. Noteworthy were six Gray Partridges at Van Petten and one recorded by Rockford of this difficult-to-find and declining game bird. Easy to detect now is the not-so Wild Turkey (1,297 in 39 circles). A lingering (wintering?) Virginia Rail was noted at Cypress Creek. Lisle Arboretum noted a late flight of 122 Sandhill Cranes while singletons were noted at Bloomington, Fermilab-Batavia, and Chillicothe. Four Least Sandpipers were at Rend Lake and another solitary bird was at Pere Marquette. An American Woodcock at Forest Glen was the northernmost of the 8 reported in the state (in 5 circles) this season. The northernmost Bonaparte's Gulls were at Chicago Urban (12) and Evanston (North Shore) (1). Fermilab-Batavia recorded the only Iceland Gull. Nine Lesser Black-backed Gulls (in 5 circles) were noted. The 2 Great Black-backed Gulls at Calumet were expected but the inland bird at Middle Fork River Valley was remarkable.



**American Pipit on the
Evanston North-Shore
Bird Count
at Fort Sheridan,
Lake County.
27 December 2003.
Photo by
Geoffrey Williamson.**

Pigeons through kinglets

Expanding Eurasian Collared-Doves (131 in 12 circles) were new for several counts. New to the Illinois CBC species list was Rend Lake's obliging White-winged Dove, a cooperative stake out. *See photo.* The largest Long-eared Owl count was Green Island/Lost Mound's 15 owls. Seventeen Short-eared Owls at Hennepin was a good tally for the north. Nine Northern Saw-whet Owls (in eight circles) was probably a result of persistent effort of diligent owlers. Belted Kingfishers (318 in 57 circles) were reported on nearly every count, several with all-time highs. Most remarkable were the two lingering Rufous Hummingbirds (both banded and photographed) at Jackson County and Bird Haven. The ubiquitous winter woodpecker next to the Downy (4,972 in 62 circles) is the Red-bellied (4,666 in 61 circles). Pileated Woodpeckers (575 in 39 circles) seem to be better detected along Illinois' deep river valleys. Indicative of a mild season were 16 Eastern Phoebes (in 7 circles), though all were in the southern tip of Illinois. Fifty-six Loggerhead Shrikes were tallied (in 13 circles). Fifty invading Northern Shrikes (in 20 circles) were noted, with the southernmost being recorded at Chautauqua. Blue Jays (11,913 in 61 circles) were noted in high numbers this season perhaps in correspondence to a good mast crop. Following a lull year with few reports (38 in 20 circles last season) Red-breasted Nuthatches (324 in 36 circles) were recorded in good numbers: 61 individuals at Waukegan certainly was a spike count. A noteworthy solitary Barn Swallow and House Wren were at Warbluff. A solitary Sedge Wren was noted at Cypress Creek and 4 Marsh Wrens were tallied (in 4 circles) with the northernmost birds being at Illini and Chautauqua.