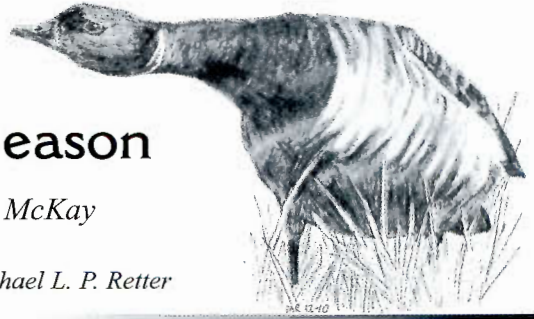


# Field Notes

## The 2009-2010 Winter Season

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*Brant drawing by Michael L. P. Retter*



In terms of weather, the winter of 2009-2010 in Illinois was very similar to the previous winter season (i.e. colder temperatures and considerable precipitation). Temperatures fluctuated throughout the entire winter season, ranging from moderately above normal to considerably below normal. Additionally, higher winds, which occurred over several periods, produced severely harsh wind chills. Illinois also experienced substantial amounts of precipitation throughout several minor and major winter storm events this season. Overall, 22 separate noteworthy winter storms moved across all or a portion of Illinois during 2009-2010. These frequently occurring storms produced a variety of precipitation types (e.g. rain, ice, sleet, and snow), depending on the temperature regime at the time of the storm. The avian community recorded this winter was once again substantially diverse, with 185 species identified statewide. This diversity was the same number identified last year (185 species). Nevertheless, this still represented one of the best wintering communities encountered in Illinois over the last decade.

During December, temperatures varied across the state ranging from considerably below normal to slightly above normal. This month was extremely active in terms of regularly occurring winter storms impacting Illinois. The season began with a fast moving storm on 8 December, which dropped 1-3 inches of snow across the northern portion of the state and light to moderate rain throughout the central region. This event was followed immediately by a slower storm on 9, 10 December, which resulted in 4-10 inches of snow in the north, 1-3 inches of snow in the central section, and light rain in the south. This storm was accompanied by 20-40 mph winds, which produced severe wind chills of -20 to -25 degrees. Following a 9-day period free of weather events, a minor storm dropped approximately one inch of snow over northern Illinois on 20 December. This was followed by a series of fast moving storms racing across the state over several dates. On 22 December, the first of these storms produced 2-5 inches of snow across the northern tier of counties and 1-2 inches over the rest of the north. This storm also resulted in light rain and freezing rain over central sections of the state. The next day (23 December), as temperatures warmed, another storm was ushered in by 20-30 mph winds. This event created moderate rain and freezing rain over northern Illinois, along with moderate rain across the southern 2/3 of the state. Another fast moving storm (20-30 mph winds) moved across Illinois on 24 December, dropping moderate to heavy rainfall over

the entire state. Relentlessly, another storm event occurred on 25, 26 December. Falling temperatures resulted in moderate rain changing to snow through the northern 2/3 of Illinois (3-5 inches in the north, 1-4 inches in the central regions), as well as moderate rainfall over the south. The final storm in this remarkable series produced 1-2 inches of snow in the north, 2-4 inches in the central, and moderate rain and snow showers over the southern portions of the state on 27 December. Following a brief respite, the final storm of the month (30 December) yielded 1-4 inches of snow over the northern half of the state, and light rain across the southern half.

During January temperatures fluctuated substantially, ranging from moderately above to considerably below normal. Early in the month, several nights experienced severe wind chills of -10 to -20 degrees. Illinois endured a strong winter storm on 6, 7 January, which dropped 6-10 inches of snow over the north, 2-6 inches across central Illinois, and 1-2 inches over the south. A week later (14 January) a southern storm created light rain and freezing rain in the center of the state, and light rainfall over the south. This event also resulted in light snow over the northeast section of Illinois. On 20 January, light to moderate rain and freezing rain fell throughout the northern half of the state, along with rainfall across the southern half. The next day (21 January) a similar but separate storm moved across the state. Light to moderate rainfall occurred throughout the entire state on 23 January. The final storm of the month (25 January) was powered by 30-40 mph winds, which resulted in wind chills ranging from 0 to -10 degrees. This event yielded 1-3 inches of snow across the northern 2/3 of Illinois.

In February, temperatures were fairly stable and ranged from slightly above to slightly below normal. However, winter storms continued to batter the state on a regular basis. On 2 February, 2-4 inches of snow fell across the northern half of Illinois, along with light rain over the southern half. The next storm occurred on 4, 5 February, producing 1-4 inches of snowfall and light to moderate rain across the northern half and moderate rain across the southern half of the state. A major storm on 8, 9 February dropped anywhere from 5-15 inches of snow across Illinois. The southern portion of the state received another 2-4 inches of snow on 14 February. The next day (15 February) the entire state experienced another 1-2 inches of snow. The final two storms of the 2009-2010 winter occurred over