

state. This was followed by light rain and freezing rain, along with patchy spots of hail, over the entire state on 23 February. The next day (24 February), the northern half of Illinois had 1-3 inches of snowfall, while the southern half of the state experienced light to moderate rain. Another weak storm on 26 February resulted in an inch of snow and light freezing rain in the north, and light rainfall in the south. The winter season ended with a stronger storm on 27 & 28 February, which produced light to moderate rain and freezing rain over the northern 2/3 of Illinois, along with moderate to heavy rainfall over the southern 1/3 of the state. February temperatures fluctuated considerably, ranging from well below to well above normal throughout the month.

The 2010-2011 winter bird community included most of the expected wintering birds, along with a fairly large variety of lingering migrants and semi-hardy species. Furthermore, a notable number of uncommon and accidental species were also documented. By the end of the winter season, very little early spring migration had been observed within Illinois.

Overall, most species composing the wintering avifaunal community were observed in less abundant numbers during the 2010-2011 winter season, as compared to the previous winter. In 2010-2011, "waterbirds" was the main species group which increased in overall abundance as compared to last winter. Species groups which decreased in overall abundance included: waterfowl (puddle and diving ducks), upland gamebirds, gulls, "permanent residents," "semi-hardy species," woodpeckers, "open country birds," mimic thrushes, sparrows, and blackbirds. Several species groups had equal numbers of increasing and decreasing species. Among these were: waterfowl (geese), diurnal raptors, shorebirds, doves, thrushes, and finches. Most waterfowl (swans) and owl species were recorded in fairly typical abundances. Several less common species, which are often recorded or should be present within the wintering community, were not encountered in 2010-2011. These species included: Gray Partridge, Eared Grebe, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Palm Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

The avian community reported this winter included ten extraordinary species (Barrow's Goldeneye, Gyrfalcon, Mew Gull, Slaty-backed Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Anna's Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Bohemian Waxwing, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Henslow's Sparrow), which required review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC) before they could be accepted (Illinois Ornithological Records Committee 2007). Several additional species requiring IORC review were also observed within the state. Among these, some of the more interesting species included: Great Egret, Whooping Crane, American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little Gull, California Gull, Forster's Tern, Barn Owl, Varied Thrush, Gray Catbird, Smith's Longspur, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Chipping Sparrow.

Waterfowl to Vultures

During the 2010-2011 winter season, 35 species of waterfowl were recorded within Illinois. This community included: 6 geese, 3 swans, 9 "puddle ducks," and 17 "diving ducks." Overall, the majority of waterfowl species, including both "puddle" and "diving ducks," were less abundant this winter. By comparison, geese had equally as many increasing

(i.e. Greater White-fronted and Ross's Geese) as decreasing (i.e. Snow, Cackling, and Canada Geese) species, while swans were reported in similar numbers to last winter. Continuing a trend noted over the past few years, overall goose populations wintering at traditional central and southern locations appeared to be considerably reduced. Nevertheless, noteworthy numbers were reported at some traditional concentration sites like Carlyle Lake. The 50 Ross's Geese noted were an exceptional flock.

The majority of both "puddle duck" and "diving duck" species were observed in lower abundance during the 2010-2011 winter season. This included the trend of substantially reduced populations of ducks at traditional central and southern wintering concentration sites. The only notable duck concentrations were found at Lake Chautauqua NWR, Carlyle Lake, and Winthrop Harbor in Lake County. Two Barrow's Goldeneye were good finds, especially the one on the Mississippi River, allowing many observers to view it.

Ring-necked Pheasant was slightly more numerous this year, though all other upland gamebirds were less abundant statewide. Very few Northern Bobwhites were observed in the northern 2/3 of the state. The ongoing trend of no Gray Partridge reports, suggested the likely disappearance of this species from Illinois.

Among the other "waterbirds," 2 species of loon, 3 grebe, 3 heron, and 2 vulture species were observed this winter. Black-crowned Night-Herons and Black Vultures were reported in numbers similar to the previous year.

Diurnal Raptors to Terns

During the 2010-2011 winter season, 13 species of diurnal raptors were encountered within the state. Most of these species were reported in similar numbers to last winter. However, the Northern Harrier and American Kestrel decreased in abundance, while the Bald and Golden Eagles and Northern Goshawk exhibited slight to moderate increases.

American Coots and Sandhill Cranes were considerably less numerous this winter statewide. One early arriving Whooping Crane was flying over Chicago in February. The only notable concentration of cranes was observed in Kankakee County in early December.

A total of 8 shorebird species were recorded in Illinois this season. Wilson's Snipe and American Woodcock were more abundant this winter, while Killdeer were slightly less plentiful. Lingering shorebirds in early December included American Avocets, Least Sandpipers, Dunlin, and Pectoral Sandpiper. Additionally, a very early spring migrant Greater Yellowlegs was detected in late February.

An impressive 14 species of gulls and 1 tern were identified in Illinois this winter. Among the wintering gull community however, all species were either less abundant or were reported in numbers similar to last season. Of the more unusual wintering gulls, Iceland and Glaucous were less plentiful, while Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed, and Great Black-backed were similar in abundance to 2010-2011. Both Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were reported in greatly reduced numbers statewide. The only noteworthy concentration of Ring-billed Gulls was observed at Carlyle Lake. The "semi-hardy" Bonaparte's Gull was also present in considerably lower abundance. Two other species requiring IORC documentation were recorded this winter including a California Gull in Lake County, and a flock of Forster's Terns with the collection of unusually late shorebirds at Rend Lake. Three extraordinary gulls were also observed