

consecutive days. On 20 February, 1-2 inches of snow fell over the northern section of the state, while light rain and/or freezing rain fell across the southern 2/3. On 21 February, a major storm closed out the winter season. This storm produced 6-12 inches of snow in the north, and 1-1.5 inches of rain over the central and southern regions.

The species recorded during the winter of 2009-2010 included nearly all of the "expected" wintering birds, along with a fairly large variety of lingering migrants and "semi-hardy" species. Additionally, many birds which are typically present only in the southern region of the state were also recorded this winter. Furthermore, a considerable 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.

Many species groups increased in overall abundance as compared to last winter. These groups included: shorebirds, doves, owls, woodpeckers, "permanent residents," "open country birds," mimics, sparrows, and blackbirds. Three species groups had equal numbers of increasing and decreasing species. These included: waterfowl (puddle ducks), shrikes, and thrushes. By comparison, several species groups decreased in overall abundance. Among these groups were: waterfowl (geese, swans, and diving ducks), upland gamebirds, gulls, and finches. Most "waterbirds," diurnal raptors, and "semi-hardy" 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 observed in 2009-2010. These species included: Gray Partridge, Snowy Owl, Tree Swallow, Dickcissel, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

The avian community this winter included nine extraordinary species (Brant, King Eider, Barrow's Goldeneye, Western Grebe, Prairie Falcon, Mew Gull, European Herring Gull, Rufous Hummingbird, and Great-tailed Grackle), which required review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC) before they could be accepted (Illinois Ornithological Records Committee 2007). Several additional species, some for which it is requested to provide additional documentation to the IORC for review, included many species rarely found during the winter season in Illinois. Among these, some of the more interesting species included: Harlequin Duck, Pacific Loon, American Bittern, King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sanderling, Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, California Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Forster's Tern, Barn Owl, Varied Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Summer Tanager, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole. Barnacle Goose (?), Whooping Crane (several) and European Goldfinch were part of Illinois's growing list of exotic/released species observed within Illinois this winter, some of which may well be added to the official Illinois list in years to come.

Waterfowl to Vultures

This winter, 36 species of waterfowl were recorded throughout Illinois. This community included: 6 geese, 3

swans, 9 "puddle ducks," and 18 "diving ducks." Overall, the majority of waterfowl species were less numerous this winter. The exception was "puddle ducks," which had as many increasing as well as decreasing species. Among the 6 species of geese, Greater White-fronted, Cackling and Snow Geese were somewhat more abundant this year, while Ross's and Canada were less numerous. Goose populations appeared to be lower within the central and southern sections of the state. For example, although large numbers of Snow and Canada Geese were encountered at traditional central and southern waterfowl concentration sites, numbers at most of these areas were considerably reduced. Mute Swans occurred in fairly typical numbers this winter, while Trumpeter and Tundra Swans were less plentiful.

Among the "puddle duck" community, half of the species increased in abundance and half decreased. However, the trend of substantially reduced numbers of ducks at traditional southern and central concentration sites continued in 2009-2010. As a consequence, no large concentrations of "puddle ducks" were reported this winter. Seven species of "diving ducks" were recorded in lower numbers statewide, while 5 species were more plentiful and 3 species occurred in typical abundance. Overall this season, as with "puddle ducks," no notable concentrations of "diving ducks" were found in Illinois.

Once again, 4 species of upland gamebirds were documented within the state. Ring-necked Pheasant and Northern Bobwhite populations continue to exhibit sharply declining trends across the state, with very few bobwhites observed in the northern 2/3 of Illinois. In contrast, the Wild Turkey occurred in greater abundance and was more widely distributed statewide. In a continuing trend, no Gray Partridge were reported this winter, which suggests that this bird's population may soon be gone from Illinois.

Among the other "waterbirds," 3 species of loons, 5 grebes, 4 herons, and 2 vultures were observed this winter. Markedly increasing encounters of Red-throated Loons along the Chicagoland lakefront appear to be the harbinger of a regular wintering population, at least along Lake Michigan. Most of the above birds were recorded in typical abundance, with the exception of the Black Vulture which occurred in increased numbers while the American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Turkey Vulture were all less numerous. The appearance of a Black Vulture in northern Illinois was surprising.

Diurnal Raptors to Terns

The 2009-2010 winter saw reports of 13 species of diurnal raptors identified within the state. Other than the American Kestrel, most other raptors were reported in typical to reduced numbers. Bald Eagle populations were substantially reduced statewide this winter, with no large concentrations reported anywhere in the state. Grassland raptors including Northern Harrier and Rough-legged Hawk were found in fairly good numbers, especially in northern Illinois. Four Golden Eagles were found this winter in widely scattered areas. Five Northern Goshawks