

were also a good number, all immatures, and also found in widely scattered locations including one in southeastern Illinois. Wintering records continue to increase for Merlin, formerly a much rarer wintering species.

American Coots and Sandhill Cranes were considerably more abundant this winter, with these species being much more widespread in their distribution. However, the bulk of the cranes were encountered in northeastern Illinois, especially during an exceptional 2-3 day movement through downtown Chicago along the Lake Michigan shoreline during a large, late-season movement south. Two rail species not normally found in winter in Illinois were found in a small marsh in far southern Illinois on a Christmas Bird Count, traditionally harboring other uncommon marsh species.

A total of 7 shorebird species were recorded this winter in Illinois. Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe were more plentiful this winter, while the American Woodcock continues to be found in the southern region, both as a rare (but increasing) wintering species as well as early returning migrants. Two uncommon wintering shorebirds documented this year in Waukegan included a Sanderling and a Purple Sandpiper, as were two others (Dunlin and Least Sandpiper) on a Christmas Bird Count in southeastern Illinois.

A very impressive total of 13 species of gulls and 1 tern (possibly 2?!) were identified this winter across the state. Among the gull community, all species were reported in lower or typical abundances, with the exception of the more numerous American Herring Gull. Of the more unusual "wintering gulls," Thayer's, Iceland, and Great Black-backed were less abundant this year, while the Lesser Black-backed and Glaucous were similar in abundance to last winter. Ring-billed were considerably less plentiful throughout the state. Although more widely distributed, the "semi-hardy" Bonaparte's Gull occurred in lower numbers. Several noteworthy concentrations of gulls were observed this winter, with Carlyle Lake again serving as a "gull magnet" in southern Illinois.

Pigeons to Kinglets

Rock Pigeons occurred in similar abundance to last winter, although they were most definitely under-reported statewide. Mourning and Eurasian Collared-Doves both were recorded in greater numbers this year and collared-doves were much more widespread. However, there were no exceptionally large dove concentrations. Monk Parakeet numbers were similar in number to past winters.

Seven species of owls were identified within Illinois this winter. Populations of Eastern Screech, Great Horned, Long-eared, and Northern Saw-whet Owls were relatively similar to last winter, although two observations of five Saw-whets in two counties were exceptional. However, once again, Screech, Horned, and Barred Owls were undoubtedly under-reported. Barred and Short-eared Owls were recorded in increased numbers this winter. Although still extremely scarce and entirely restricted to the south, Barn Owls seem to be increasing. A single female Rufous Hummingbird was identified this winter.

Most woodpecker species exhibited increased numbers, although Downy Woodpeckers were less abundant, while the Hairy Woodpecker occurred in numbers similar to those encountered last winter. Although no notable concentrations of woodpeckers were recorded this winter, Red-headed Woodpeckers were more abundant and widely distributed particularly in the southern region. Furthermore, most permanent resident woodpeckers (i.e. Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers) were again probably under-reported. Eastern Phoebe were found in similar numbers to those encountered last year. Loggerhead Shrikes were slightly more numerous, but were located only in the southern portion of the state, while Northern Shrikes once again staged a very respectable movement into the state.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported in similar numbers, as were most of the common permanent residents (i.e. corvids, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches) in the 2009-2010 winter season. No extraordinary concentrations, however, were observed among the other common permanent residents. Horned Larks were more numerous this winter, while Brown Creepers were less abundant.

Five species of wren were reported within the state during the 2009-2010 winter. Carolina and Winter Wrens occurred in greater abundance. Both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets occurred in similar numbers to those encountered last winter within the state.

Thrushes to Buntings

Of the thrushes and mimids, Eastern Bluebirds and all the mimids were more plentiful this year, while the American Robin occurred in lower numbers. European Starlings were more abundantly reported this winter. American Pipits were considerably more numerous (especially along the Chicago lakefront) and widely distributed this year, while Cedar Waxwings were present in lower numbers throughout Illinois.

Five species of warbler were found in Illinois this winter. Yellow-rumped Warblers were less abundant and less widely distributed across the state, with the other three warbler species recorded being Ovenbird, Orange-crowned and Palm Warbler, along with 3 Common Yellowthroats.

A female Summer Tanager was identified in Kane County. Eastern Towhees were reported in similar abundance as compared to last winter, with one Spotted Towhee found on a Chicagoland Christmas Bird Count. Winter sparrow diversity (15 species) was amazing this winter, including a very rare species for the winter season, Grasshopper Sparrow, nicely photographed. Of these, most were tallied in increased numbers. Dark-eyed Juncos, Savannah Sparrows, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings were all much more abundant and widespread this winter throughout the state, but the latter three (as well as American Pipits) were almost unprecedentedly numerous along the Chicagoland lakefront. A single Rose-breasted Grosbeak was encountered at Lake Calumet.