

During the last winter (1991-1992) four Mew Gull were observed in the Chicago area (*Meadowlark*, 1:103). This winter's three sightings plus a county first for Will County (see Winter Field Notes in this issue) recorded by Joe B. Milosevich brings a Chicago area total to eight sightings the last two winters and at least 13 sightings for the state.

—David B. Johnson, 504 Crown Point Drive, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

Rock Wren Winters at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

A rainy January cold front had just passed through southern Illinois and I knew this might be a perfect time to look for gulls and ducks at the dam and spillway of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge (Williamson County). With this in mind on 14 January 1993, I set forth on my lunch hour in search of any unusual gulls which might be attracted by thermal-shocked gizzard shad which spill over the dam. The shad are easy pickings for many gulls. Pulling up at the parking area at the west end of the dam, I surveyed the lake which was teeming with waterbirds: a couple of loons, a very large raft of ducks (mostly scaup), several groups of Horned Grebes, and of course several hundred swirling gulls. It was a typical birding dilemma: deciding what to focus on in a short time. I chose gulls and walked three-fourths the way down the rip-rapped dam. Almost immediately after setting up my scope I noticed a little brown bird in the corner of my scope view that popped up like a little penguin bobbing with its knees in a rather rigid vertical upright position. It was ducking in and out of the rocks which were about 1- to 2-feet wide. No vegetation was nearby.

I instantly knew I had found a Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*). I noted the following details: overall a rather gray-brown lightly white-spotted wren with dark legs and feet; tan wash to the flanks; faint gray-brown streaking on the whitish breast, and a faint eye line. Needless to say, I couldn't concentrate on any of the hundreds of ducks and gulls that were around and, after savoring this rare find, I raced to call Todd Fink and Judy DeNeal.

The Rock Wren stayed at the wildlife refuge through the winter period (28 Feb. 1993) and was seen by many observers including Illinois Ornithological Society field trip participants in late January. Todd Fink took excellent

photographs of the wren which were diagnostic and confirmed this as a first record for the refuge and the county.

Interestingly, the bird was discovered during the severest part of the winter. For several nights, the temperature dropped into the lower teens. In addition, two separate storms dumped about 20 inches of snow. Inclement weather did not seem to reduce the myriad spiders which inhabited the rocky area. Perhaps the wren subsisted on spiders and other insects in the rocks. Todd Fink saw the bird eat a moth and heard it sing on one occasion. I also heard the buzzy "tick-ear" call note once.

—Robert Danley, 2201 Clay St., Murphysboro, IL 62966

Swainson's Thrush Seen on Evanston North Shore Christmas Bird Count

We knew the routine well, Eugene and David Wachtel, Bernie Harrold and I were to cover the Skokie Lagoons in northern Cook County for the Evanston North Shore Christmas Bird Count. We missed the "old timers" like Seymour Rubin, Lynne and Fair Carpenter, but we got our assignments, and we knew the birding "hot spots" to cover in our area. One of the best spots was the effluent stream or channel along the west edge of the Skokie Lagoons just south of Dundee Rd. (Rt. 68) and bordering the east edge of Interstate 94. On a cold winter's day one can see steam rising eerily along the expressway; 26 December 1992 was no exception. Having parked on Dundee Rd., we began our search in brisk 13-degree chilly but clear weather with some northwesterly winds.

Walking down the bike path which parallels the ditch, we spotted some American Robins in the buckthorn. We heard the diagnostic sharp non-musical "check" call chips of Yellow-rumped Warblers between us and the stream's edge. We noted several of these lingering warblers along with an occasional White-throated Sparrow, a surprisingly late Ruby-crowned Kinglet, several Song Sparrows, and Cedar Waxwings. But none of these birds could rival the bird Dave Wachtel first spotted through the mist along the west bank of the stream along with an American Robin huddled close to the water's edge probing a black mud bank. Bernie Harrold, the Wachtels and I soon focused on