

Iowa. One Herring Gull-sized, dark-mantled bird reminded me of a Lesser Black-backed Gull, several of which had been seen during the winter season.

When seen through a scope, it was clearly not a Lesser Black-backed Gull as the legs were bright pink, not yellow. It was also too small for a Great Black-backed Gull and lacked the totally black mantle. I was left with a choice between Slaty-backed (*Larus schistisagus*) and Western Gull.

I flushed the bird noting the wide white trailing edge on the wing extending toward the leading edge just behind the wing tip. That eliminated Western Gull.

The Slaty-backed Gull's head was white and smudged with tan behind the light eye. Its bill was yellow with some red near the tip of the lower mandible. The most distal two primaries had white mirrors. I also noticed a white comma on the back.

I observed the bird for 10 minutes using binoculars and scope. Then the bird flew across the Mississippi River toward the Rock Island Arsenal.

Slaty-backed Gull was recorded here 14 - 25 February 1989 and once at Alton during the winter of 1983/84.

- Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, Iowa 52803.

Editor's note: For detailed field identification notes and an excellent report of the "First North American occurrence of Slaty-backed Gull (in Illinois and Missouri) away from the Pacific Ocean" see (Goetz, Rudden, Snetsinger, 1986) American Birds 40:207-216. Also see "A Slaty-backed Gull at St. Louis", Ill. Audubon Bull. No. 209:26-30, 1984. If accepted by IORC, Petersen's sighting would represent the third state record. Observers are encouraged to carefully examine all dark-mantled gulls in Illinois.

Varied Thrush Winters in Springfield

On 27 December 1991 I was searching for tardy or stray birds at the Adams Sanctuary on the east side of Springfield. It was mild with temperatures in the 40s and if it hadn't been for the early November record low temperatures and snow, more passerines would have been present.

This sheltered area, an island of woods inside

the city, featured a bird feeder below which I noticed an American Robin. As I was thinking, "Now, why couldn't that be a Varied Thrush?" I heard a noise behind me. I turned to see another robin-sized bird midway up a hackberry tree. This bird had a large orange eyeline, dark crown and cheek patch, and a brighter orange thrush-like throat.

I knew immediately it was a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) and I savored the find as long as I could. This bird was a female because of its dull chest band and fairly dull orange coloration. I noticed dapple gray on the flanks and the dark, blue-gray back and tail as well as the obvious orange on the wings. A Red-tailed Hawk flew over. The thrush gave its nasal whistle note and escaped my view.

I tried several times the rest of the winter to find the Varied Thrush, but without success. I was sure I heard its call 24 January 1992, again when a Red-tailed Hawk flew over.

I had finally conceded that this bird had migrated or perished when on 6 April 1992, I spotted it among several robins on the northeast side of Adams Sanctuary. Although I'm fairly sure this was the same female, it had changed considerably. The plumage was worn, the eyeline was whitish buff, and the throat was duller orange. The back, tail, and crown were brownish. The orange on the wing was still noticeable, but the breast band looked faint.

It may seem unusual that this species breeds and migrates in a worn plumage, but the Varied Thrush does not go through a pre-alternate molt, according to Pyle et al. in *Identification Guide to North American Passerines* (1987).

Two days later Vernon Kleen saw this thrush in the same place. This bird must have wintered locally and went undetected, since, like most Old World (*Zoothera*) thrushes it can be secretive.

- H. David Bohlen, 1920 S. 10 1/2 St. Springfield, IL 62703.

Editor's Note: Forty Illinois records of Varied Thrush exist. While this species is a rare winter resident, it has occurred almost annually the past twenty years. (Bohlen, 1989).

Chipping Sparrow Lingers in Southern Illinois

Winter 1991/92 was unusually mild causing a number of migrants to linger in southern Illinois.