

grove which had been planted as a wind break for the home. We scouted the surrounding area including the pine woods but did not find any new species to add to the day's birding list.

By 10 a.m. we had left and were driving slowly down the farm lane past the white pine grove when Myrna Deaton and I spotted a bird with a yellow throat about 6 feet up on a sunny outside branch of the pine trees. We knew we had a warbler as the bird's bill was narrow and sharply pointed. The size and yellow throat made us think of Common Yellowthroat and maybe Yellow-throated Warbler, but neither fit what we were seeing. When the bird turned its back we instantly knew it was a Northern Parula Warbler (*Parula americana*) by the greenish-yellow patch on the upper back plus the distinct white wingbars and partial white eye rings.

We documented the bird by taking notes and comparing our bird's field marks to the field guides. We noted that it was an immature 1st basic (winter) plumaged bird.

About this time I remembered I had my camera in the trunk of my car along with my 400mm telephoto lens. But

would the bird remain? Backing the car up 50 feet, I stepped out to get the camera and asked Myrna Deaton to watch the bird. I was just about ready when she informed me the bird had flown across the road, out of sight, to the other pine trees. Luckily we found the bird almost immediately and I was able to get six fairly good photos. We watched the bird as it searched for spiders and wintering bugs in the needle sheaves of the pine trees. We presumed this might be how it had survived the harsh winter.

Even though Steve Bailey looked for the bird at a later date, to our knowledge, the bird was never seen again. Bohlen (1989, *The Birds of Illinois*) lists only one other winter record for Illinois; that of an individual bird which spent the winter feeding on "peanut butter at a feeder" from mid-December 1982-early February 1983 in Belleville, St. Clair County. The species normally winters from northern Mexico to Belize in Central America.



—Richard Palmer, 3423 Spring Creek Road, Decatur,  
IL 62526

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## Avian Annals

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by Eric Walters

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### 10 years ago:

On a cold December day, a birder discovered a dark-mantled gull with "intense pink" legs near Alton along the Mississippi River. Further study over the next few weeks revealed that the bird was an Asian species the Slaty-backed Gull. The sighting established the first record of this species in the lower 48 states outside of Washington state. (Illinois Audubon Bulletin 209:26-30.)

A birder planned an Illinois "big year", trying to observe as many species from 1 January to 31 December as possible. He recorded 307 species which tied the state record. (Illinois Audubon Bulletin 208:50.)

### 20 years ago:

A bird resembling a Bonaparte's Gull was soon identified by its red bill and became Illinois' first sighting of a Black-headed Gull. (Illinois Audubon Bulletin 167:18.)

### 30 years ago:

A Boreal Chickadee was observed at a Dixon feeder during February. The species has not been recorded in Illinois since. (Audubon Field Notes 17:329.)

### 40 years ago:

The most interesting species found on the Christmas Bird Counts was a Townsend's Solitaire at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Cook County. (Mlodinow, *Chicagoland Birds*, 1984, p. 184.)

### 43 years ago:

A birder traveling between Madison, Wisconsin and Freeport collected dead Eastern Screech Owls hit by cars during an 18 year period. Of the 235 birds found, 61 percent were the gray color phase and 39 percent were the red phase. (Auk 71:205.) ➤