

Flickers and shrikes

Populations of Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers, as well as Northern Flickers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, appeared to be reduced during the 1999-2000 winter. Loggerhead Shrikes were relatively widespread and abundant, concentrating in the southern third of the state and Northern Mockers were found, in record numbers, in the northern half of Illinois. (See separate article in this issue for an account of one of the state's biggest invasions of Northern Shrike.) Eastern Phoebe remained very scarce throughout the state, while a single immature male Rufous Hummingbird spent the first few days of December in Urbana. These Field Notes don't reflect those high numbers because the observations weren't reported to the Field Notes editor. Many records were gleaned from IBET, Illinois Birders Exchanging Thoughts, Illinois' birding list serve..

For the most part, permanent residents (corvids, Tufted Titmouse, chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, European Starling, House Finch, and House Sparrow) were reported in very low numbers. Red-breasted Nuthatch, however, was relatively abundant statewide. I strongly suspect these species are greatly under-reported during all seasons of the year. The Brown Creeper occurred in somewhat reduced numbers, while the Horned Lark was fairly abundant and widely distributed throughout the state. Overall, 3 wrens, both kinglets, 3 thrushes, 2 mimic thrushes, and 3 warbler species were identified. Carolina and Winter Wrens occurred in somewhat lesser numbers, while a single Sedge Wren was observed at Carlyle Lake on December 19. Numbers seemed to be down slightly for both kinglets. Eastern Bluebird and Hermit Thrush numbers were fairly typical, however American Robin numbers were substantially reduced from last year's abundance. In contrast to the normally scarce Brown Thrashers, Northern Mockingbirds were encountered throughout Illinois in greater than usual numbers. The population of Cedar Waxwings was greater this past winter and a **single Bohemian Waxwing** was observed from 22-25 January in Rochester (Sangamon County). Small groups of American Pipits were encountered in the southern part of the state. Fairly normal numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers were encountered across Illinois, while a single American Redstart was observed in Chicago on December 6 and one Nashville Warbler was sighted in Chicago's Grant Park on December 9.

Sparrows

A good diversity (18 species) of sparrows was recorded. Two Spotted Towhees were identified in the Springfield area and a decent number of Eastern Towhees were reported. The distribution of these towhees was somewhat "clumped," as noted by the 11 birds at Rend Lake on December 18 and 5 on the Horseshoe Lake CBC on December 28. The majority of sparrows occurred in typical or greater populations than usual. The exceptions were the American Tree Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow. The populations of these two species were down in the 1999-2000 winter. The highlight of the sparrow community was the Chipping Sparrow, which was present all February in Orland Park (Cook County). Dark-eyed Juncos were reported in decent numbers, but were probably under-reported. Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were fairly abundant and widespread, especially through the northern half of the state. **Three Smith's Longspurs** were discovered at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area 21 December (representing Illinois first well-documented win-

ter record.) A single Indigo Bunting was present in Boone County from December 22 through January 2. Good diversities of blackbirds (8 species) and finches (9 species) were identified during the 1999-2000 winter. Among the blackbird species (Red-winged, Rusty, and Brewer's Blackbirds, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird), much greater than normal numbers wintered sporadically through the state. Blackbird concentrations were undoubtedly influenced by habitat availability. Highlights within the blackbird community included 300,000 and 15,000 Red-wings at the Rend Lake CBC and La Salle County, respectively. Another blackbird highlight was the state's first record of **Scott's Oriole** (see separate article in this issue.)

Additionally, 800,000 and 250,000 Common Grackles were reported at Calhoun County and the Rend Lake CBC, respectively. Sangchris Lake played host to a single adult male Yellow-headed Blackbird and a **single adult female Great-tailed Grackle** in early February. Large numbers of blackbirds, especially Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles, began returning to Illinois during the latter part of February. The winter finches (Purple Finch, Red and White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpoll, and Pine Siskin) were present in considerably greater numbers this year, as Illinois possibly experienced a mild invasion. Nevertheless, only 4 Evening Grosbeaks were reported from Urbana on December 18 and a single male Hoary Redpoll was observed in Skokie (Cook County) for most of February. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow continues to increase in numbers and is expanding its distribution northwards along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

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