

Waterfowl to herons

Illinois hosted a diverse waterfowl community consisting of 5 species of geese, 3 swans, 9 puddle ducks, and 16 diving ducks. These species ranged from more numerous to less abundant than usual. Among goose species, the Greater White-fronted continues to be more abundant and widespread than in the past, while Canada Geese were less abundant. In fact, no large concentrations of Canada Geese were observed at traditional southern wintering locations. The Snow Goose occurred in fairly typical numbers; however, Ross's Geese were not detected as commonly as the last few winters. This winter the Cackling Goose became recognized as a distinct species, and seemed to be somewhat abundant and widespread. However, identification of this species is still problematic. All three swan species were substantially more abundant this winter, particularly throughout the northern portion of Illinois.

Once again, this past winter season found reduced numbers among most puddle ducks. A very noteworthy **655 Long-tailed Ducks** were encountered at Winthrop Harbor and **3 Harlequin Ducks** were found on Lake Michigan.

Upland gamebirds including Ring-necked Pheasant and Northern Bobwhite remained fairly scarce, while Wild Turkey populations were up somewhat from last year. A notable 106 Greater Prairie-Chickens were tallied at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area. Gray Partridge populations throughout the state remain tenuous, with no birds reported in 2004-2005. However, see CBC report in this issue.

Among other waterbirds a single **Pacific Loon** at Carlyle Lake was notable, while Horned Grebe was noticeably less abundant. A singleton **American Bittern** at Carlyle Lake and even rarer **Green Heron** in Cook County were both later found dead. Once again, both vulture species were primarily distributed throughout the southern section.

Diurnal raptors to gulls

Twelve species of diurnal raptors were reported in fairly typical to reduced numbers. Noteworthy raptor numbers included **1,694** and **1,458 Bald Eagles** along the Mississippi River as well as **52** and **26 Northern Harriers** at Pyramid State Recreation Area (Perry County) and Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, respectively. Always, uncommon, Northern Goshawk and Golden Eagle, were found in typical numbers and mainly from the central part of the state.

An amazing **10,600 American Coots** were tallied at Hennepin-Hopper Lake in Putnam County. Sandhill Cranes were considerably more numerous in Illinois this past winter, with several notable concentrations occurring in the northeast.

For the second consecutive year, 7 species of shorebirds were recorded within Illinois during winter. Killdeer, snipe, and woodcock were scarce or in reduced numbers, while three more unusual shorebird species were reported including a single **Sanderling** at Waukegan, **28** and **3 Least Sandpipers** at Jasper County and Rend Lake, respectively, as well as **3 Dunlin** in Jasper County. The most noteworthy shorebird this past winter was a remarkable pair of **Purple Sandpipers** at Waukegan.

Interestingly, the only gull to occur in greater abundance this winter was the semi-hardy Bonaparte's Gulls, including a concentration of 8,000 at Carlyle Lake. The more unusual

species (Thayer's, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls) occurred in fairly normal abundances, but were largely restricted to the northern section of the state. The Great Black-backed Gull was only reported from the north and again in smaller numbers. The rarest gulls documented this winter were **Black-legged Kittiwake, Mew and California**.

Pigeons to kinglets

An incredible five species of doves were identified. Along with normal numbers of Rock Pigeon and Mourning Dove, the Eurasian Collared-Dove continues to expand with a high count of 40 birds reported from Carlyle Lake. In addition, a **Common Ground-Dove** was documented in Mason County, and an overdue first-state record **Inca Dove** was found in Carbondale.

Eight species of owls were found during the winter of 2004/2005. Barn Owls wintered at typical southern Illinois breeding locations. Overall, most species occurred in typical numbers, although the Eastern Screech, Great Horned, and Barred Owls were certainly under-reported statewide. Wintering Long-eared Owls were found in typical numbers across Illinois. An incredible **9 Northern Saw-whet Owls** were present at Carlyle Lake throughout the winter. Three Snowy Owls were observed south to Springfield.

Woodpeckers, which were substantially less abundant, included the Red-headed and Downy Woodpeckers, as well as the Northern Flicker. The only notable number was the **163 Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Oakwood Bottoms. Only one Eastern Phoebe was found (Massac County). The Northern Shrike once again staged an impressive irruption, although birds were more restricted to the northern third of the state compared to the 2003/2004 irruption.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch was abundant and widespread in the north. A single **Fish Crow** was a great find along Andalusia Slough in Rock Island County, along with **Tree Swallows** at two southern Illinois locations.

Carolina Wrens continue to increase northward, although highest numbers were typically found in southern Illinois. **Two Marsh Wrens** were found, surprisingly both in northern Illinois.

Thrushes to buntings

The Hermit Thrush was noticeably less abundant this winter compared with last winter. The American Robin was less numerous overall, but seemed to be found in greater numbers throughout the northern region. One **Varied Thrush** was found in Cook County in December.

Although undoubtedly under-reported, the European Starling was considerably more abundant this winter (or at least counted more often), with concentrations of 40,000, 12,464, and 10,000 tallied at Carlyle Lake, Winnebago County, and Carlyle Lake, respectively. Both the American Pipit and Cedar Waxwing occurred in greater numbers in 2004-2005, with reports of pipits including **88** and **64** birds at Urbana and Rend Lake, respectively.

Four species of warblers were found within the state during the 2004-2005 winter season. The Yellow-rumped Warbler was noticeably less abundant, except for **50** and **48** reported in Du Page and Alexander Counties, respectively. Other warblers included **2 Orange-crowneds** (1 in Cook County and 1 at Rend Lake), **4** and **1 Pine Warblers** at Rend