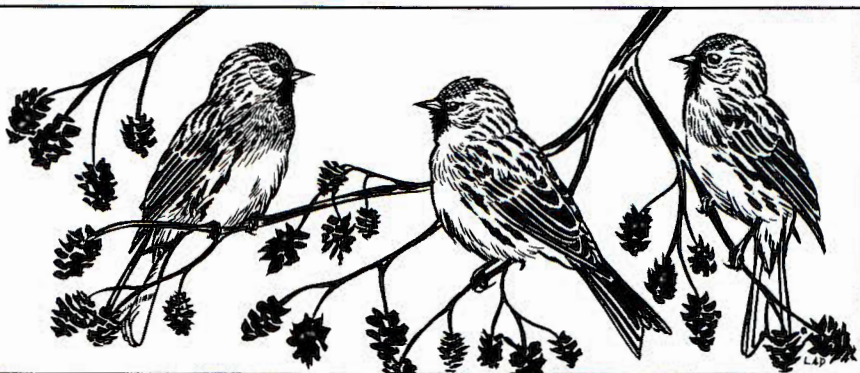


Field Notes



1991-92 WINTER SEASON

by Robert F. Danley

The 1991/92 winter field notes submitted contained an impressive spectrum of species and, at times, large numbers.

Both December and January began with sub-zero temperatures in the north, but ended statewide with monthly averages above normal. December was four to five degrees Fahrenheit above normal. January was six to eight degrees Fahrenheit above normal.

Record highs were recorded in February, which averaged seven to eight degrees above normal. Snow was recorded in all three months. December had the heaviest accumulations (three to fourteen inches) while February and January followed with one to eleven inches and one to nine inches, respectively. Total precipitation was below normal for each month statewide.

With monthly average temperatures above normal, open water conditions provided for good sightings of waterbirds throughout the season. Thirty-one species of waterfowl were observed including all three scoter species as well as large numbers of Oldsquaw and Greater Scaup.

Gulls, the mainstay of many a winter field trip, were the highlights of the season at traditional spots. A whopping fifteen species were observed including the first winter Ivory Gull in Chicago. Incredibly, three other vagrant species were recorded: Slaty-backed Gull (third state record), Mew Gull (fifth through eighth state records), and California Gull.

Species detected past their usual departure times include: Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, three Virginia Rails, Sora, Red Phalarope, Sanderlings (probable), Eastern Phoebe, Marsh Wren, Northern Waterthrush, Chipping

and Lincoln's Sparrows, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

This was a flight year for Snowy Owls (second largest on record) and Common Redpolls. Other finches were absent or low in numbers. Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harrier were scarce. Berry-eating species appeared scarce while the acorn eaters were noted in larger than average numbers. A Varied Thrush, a rare winter resident, was seen in Springfield.

A few observers forwarded notes with an undertone of "where were the birds?". Perhaps the mild weather prevented better concentrations, especially of passerines which were considered scarce.

This seasonal report contains the most significant observational records during the winter season statewide. Some records are not included here because they may be considered either late fall or early spring migrants. These will appear in the appropriate seasonal reports.

Many thanks to the many contributors who are acknowledged in an initialized format after the corresponding field record and collectively in the following list: Douglas Anderson, Steve Bailey, David Bohlen, Laurence Binford, Richard Biss, Toby Brown, Elizabeth Chato, Karin Cassel, Robert Chapel, Roger Coons (RCo), Bob Danley, Judy DeNeal, Jeff Donaldson (JDo), Myrna Deaton, Mark Donohue (MDo), Mary Jane Easterday, Sue Friscia, Todd Fink, Brad Grover, Scott Garrow, Jeff Hardt (JHa), Kanae Hirabayashi, Michael Hogg, Robert Hughes, David Johnson, Dennis Jones (DJo), Peter Kasper, Dan Kassebaum (DKa), Vernon Kleen, James Landing, Kevin Lubey, David Mandell, Walter Marcisz, Joe Milosevich, Jim Neal, Richard Palmer, Peter Peterson, John Purcell (JPu), Doug

FIELD NOTES HEADING:

Winter 1991-92 was a flight year for Common Redpolls. Drawing by Leslie A. DeCoursey.