



Field Notes

The 2006/2007 Winter Season

Drawing of a Northern Shrike by Michael L. P. Retter.

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The winter of 2006-2007 showed widely fluctuating temperatures ranging from well-above normal to considerably below normal. Precipitation in various forms included several minor events, along with 10 more substantial storms. Avian diversity was high, with 176 species recorded statewide (compare last winter's total of 161 species). In fact, the number of species was among the highest in Illinois in recent winters.

December was ushered in by plummeting temperatures amid a major winter storm on the 1st, dropping 4-12 inches of snow across the northern 2/3 of the state and 2-3 inches of rain and freezing rain across the south. During the latter 2/3 of the month, weather conditions moderated and temperatures remained well above normal. A series of storms moved across Illinois during the last third of the month. The first of these, on 20 December, soaked the northern 2/3 of the state with 0.5-1 inch of rain, followed by a slow-moving storm 21-22 December that dropped another 0.5-1 inch of rain over the entire state. The southern portion of Illinois received an additional 0.25-0.5 inch of rain on 25 December. Minor waves of rain moved across the state from 29-31 Dec.

Extremely mild temperatures and very dry conditions continued through the first third of January. During the middle third, temperatures fluctuated widely, from above normal early to below normal in the middle of the period to near normal by the end. On 11-12 January, light rain turning to ice fell over most of Illinois. A three-day major winter storm occurred 13-15 January. At first, this storm produced fairly heavy rainfall (approximately 1 inch in the south and a little less in the north). However, as temperatures fell, this turned into a substantial ice storm over much of the state. Heavy rain and ice coated the southern 2/3 of Illinois, while the northern section of the state received heavy ice and 2+ inches of snow. In the aftermath of this storm, light snow continued to fall in the north 16-17 January, and temperatures dropped severely. During the last third of the month, temperatures were slightly to considerably below normal. Another winter storm on 21 January dropped 3-4 inches of snow across northern Illinois, 1-2 inches through the central

region, and nearly 0.5 inch of rain over the south. Light snow fell over much of the state on 24 January.

Temperatures remained well below normal during the early half of February, including several days with wind chills of 0 to -30 degrees F. A winter storm on 6 February produced 3-6 inches of snow over the northern half of the state, and up to 3 inches of snow throughout the south. A slow-moving storm on 12-13 February dropped another 4-8 inches of snow across the northern 2/3 of Illinois, and fairly heavy rain and freezing rain throughout the south. During the last half of the month, temperatures moderated to normal or somewhat higher. Another storm on 16 February deposited an additional 2-4 inches of snow across the northern half of the state, along with light rain through the southern half. The final, occurring 24-25 February, produced 0.5-1 inch of rain over the southern half of Illinois, while the northern half of the state received 1 inch of precipitation including rain, freezing rain, sleet, and snow. Very little early spring migration was noted in late February.

Five species requiring review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee were reported this season. Photographic records for Gyrfalcon, Black-headed Gull and Say's Phoebe have been reviewed and accepted by the Committee, while records for Burrowing Owl and Great-tailed Grackle are pending review.

WATERFOWL TO DIURNAL RAPTORS.

A total of 33 species of waterfowl were identified including 5 geese, 3 swans, 9 puddle ducks, and 16 diving ducks. Overall, most waterfowl species were less abundant. Greater White-fronted and Canada Geese were more plentiful in the north, while Cackling Geese were reported in greater numbers in the central section of Illinois. Large numbers of Snow Geese were present at traditional southern waterfowl concentration sites, however Canada Goose populations at these locations were considerably reduced. Mute Swans were less abundant statewide, while Trumpeter and Tundra Swans were more numerous.