

Puddle ducks showed stable to decreased numbers over last winter, with the sole exception of Gadwall, which increased slightly during the 2006-2007 winter. Populations at traditional southern and central sites were substantially reduced, and no major concentrations of puddle ducks were encountered. Likewise, most diving duck species were also less numerous in 2006-2007.

Ring-necked Pheasant and Northern Bobwhite continued to exhibit declining population trends, with very few bobwhites recorded in the northern 2/3 of the state. By comparison, the Wild Turkey was reported in greater overall abundance. A single observation of 67 Greater Prairie-Chickens at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area was noteworthy.

Highlights among loons included 7 Red-throated Loons at Illinois Beach State Park and a Pacific Loon in Madison County. Common Loons, however, were limited in both numbers and distribution. Pied-billed and Horned Grebes, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Great Blue Herons were all somewhat more numerous, but the only noteworthy concentration among these species was at Rend Lake.

Among the 16 species of diurnal raptors reported (including the American vultures in a provisional return to their former taxonomic position by the American Ornithologists' Union), all occurred in typical to reduced numbers, with the exception of good numbers of American Kestrels. Turkey Vultures occurred in fairly typical numbers, while Black Vultures once again showed decreases throughout the south. Bald Eagle populations were substantially reduced, especially along the Mississippi River and throughout the north. An adult Gyrfalcon was photographed at Livingston County.

#### RAILS TO WOODPECKERS.

A late Virginia Rail was spotted at Rend Lake 16 December. American Coots were less common this winter and were largely restricted to the southern region. Two of the reports of Sandhill Cranes likely involved early spring migrants.

Two unusual shorebird species were found: a Least Sandpiper in St. Clair County, and three Purple Sandpipers along Lake Michigan. Shorebird numbers were otherwise poor among the usual winter-season species. Killdeer numbers were similar to last winter, but this was still lower than usual. Wilson's Snipe and American Woodcock populations decreased substantially.

An impressive total of 12 species of gulls was reported in Illinois. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls continued their declining wintering population trends, while the other more usual large winter gulls showed modest deviation from last winter's populations and were less numerous overall than during the recent past. The only noteworthy concentrations among these species were 15 Thayer's Gulls at Winthrop Harbor and 40,000 Ring-billed Gulls at Carlyle Lake. The semi-hardy Bonaparte's Gull was more abundant this winter, including a high of 6,000 Bonaparte's Gulls, also at Carlyle Lake. Scarcities among gulls included a Laughing Gull at Illinois Beach State Park, a California Gull on the Mississippi River at Madison County, and three Black-

legged Kittiwakes (including one at Baldwin Lake in southern Illinois). A Black-headed Gull at Chicago remained well into March. The sole tern reported was a Forster's at Rend Lake in mid-December.

Counts of Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were down, while the Eurasian Collared-Dove population remained fairly stable, although more widespread.

Nine species of owls were identified during the season. Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned, and Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported in fairly typical numbers. Barred, Long-eared, and Short-eared Owls showed slight increases, with a high of 35 Short-eared Owls at St. Clair County. Although still extremely scarce and entirely restricted to the south, 2 Barn Owls were reported at both Arklands Reclamation Area and Carlyle Lake. Snowy Owls were barely reported this winter, although one of the three individuals found was surprisingly far south, in Madison County. A Burrowing Owl at Pyramid State Park was an exceptional find. This was just one of numerous noteworthy sightings from Perry County conservation sites currently threatened by economic development.

Belted Kingfishers were more widespread this winter, particularly in the north. There were no surprises among woodpeckers. Red-headed Woodpeckers continued to exhibit decreasing wintering populations, while the other species showed stable to slightly increased numbers, but with no noteworthy concentrations.

#### FLYCATCHERS TO WAXWINGS

Eastern Phoebe were found in typical numbers, almost entirely in the south. A Say's Phoebe was reported sporadically over a two-month period at Jasper County. Loggerhead Shrikes were more numerous this winter, but were confined to the south, while Northern Shrikes were widely scattered as singles over the north and central sections of Illinois.

Resident populations of corvids, titmice, and nuthatches were generally stable to increased over last year, with no major concentrations. An early Fish Crow returned to Madison County by late February. Red-breasted Nuthatches had a weak influx while Horned Lark numbers were high, including 1,200 in Adams County. No swallows were reported.

Brown Creepers were widespread. Noteworthy concentrations of Carolina Wrens were found in Massac, Champaign, and Union Counties. Winter Wren populations showed a slight decrease. Three other species of wrens were noted: a single House Wren; 1 Sedge Wren in the south; 4 Marsh Wrens in the south; and a fifth Marsh Wren in northern Illinois into January. Golden-crowned Kinglets showed modest gains in northern and central Illinois, while Ruby-crowned Kinglets were notably less common this season.

Eastern Bluebirds were in excellent numbers statewide, while populations of Hermit Thrushes and American Robins were unimpressive; in particular, no large roosts of American Robins were reported. A female Varied Thrush was documented in Ogle County.

A trend in recent winters of increased records of Gray Catbirds was reversed this season, with only a single individual, in Boone County. Populations of Northern