

without success. I missed checking eye and leg color, although my impression was that the eye was dark, as it is in most immature gulls.

This sighting represents the second accepted record by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee of five reported Glaucous-winged Gulls in Illinois. The state's first confirmed record was found at Lake Calumet in December 1992. See *Meadowlark*: 4: 47, "First Confirmed Illinois Record of the Glaucous-winged Gull" by David B. Johnson, Laurence C. Binford, Ph.D., Alan Stokic, and Walter Marcisz.

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Snowy Owl in central Illinois, Vermilion County

On New Year's Eve 1994, a fellow Vermilion County Audubonite, Thelbert Falconer, called to report that there had been a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) in the Rossville area for the past several days. I could think of no better way to celebrate New Year's Day than tracking this northern species. Two anxious Audubon

members scanned fence posts, power line poles, swells, and swales of empty farm fields on both sides of the road until I finally saw the Snowy Owl as it flew from one weed patch to another and pounced on prey.

Two days later, the Snowy Owl was observed in the same area, but near a barn. At intervals, he moved to grassy patches near soil drainage structures. He was most cautious and stayed barely within binocular range. James O. Smith's spotting scope revealed an almost pure white bird with large yellow eye and perhaps a gray feather or two. While we were watching, the owl suddenly rose from the ground and flew directly toward us, then made a right angled turn to a perch on a pole on the next road, just out of camera and binocular range. The following day, the owl was hunting in a cornfield near a grass waterway, a mile or so east of the original sighting point.

Three days passed and snow covered Vermilion County. We decided to check for the bird despite the difficulty of seeing it in the snow. We found it perched on a fat pipe at a gas installation in an empty field. Before this sighting, the most recent confirmed Snowy Owl in central Illinois was January 1990 in Catlin, Illinois, where it remained until April.

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In Memory of Todd Fink

Todd Fink died unexpectedly on July 11, 1995, after a short illness. He was 36 years old, a natural heritage biologist for the Illinois Department of Conservation (now the Illinois Department of Natural Resources), and the best known birder in southern Illinois. He led field trips for the Illinois Ornithological Society, Illinois Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and many local organizations. He wrote articles for *Meadowlark*, *Illinois Highlights*, *Illinois Audubon*, and *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Well-known as a nature photographer, he had photo credits in several books and periodicals including *The Nature of Illinois*. He was a former IOS director and editorial advisor for *Meadowlark* at the time of his death.

Many southern Illinois birders joined the ranks as a result of Todd's influence. He showed us the best spots at the best times, often resulting in the best birds. During the spring warbler migration, we were impressed by his ability to identify birds not only by song, but also by call notes. While we were focusing on a warbler's song, he was noting a scolding vireo and three kinds of frogs. His mind was quick to process the rarer voice in the dawn chorus, the distant singer we'd all eventually hear, but Todd usually heard first.

He was the only person I met who carried binoculars while he jogged. On one April run he discovered two Henslow's Sparrows. Once he spotted a Short-eared Owl foraging at dusk. Another time he found a family of Pine Warblers overwintering in a pine grove on his jogging route. If Todd didn't have the earliest record or the

highest count, he'd likely have the latest departure date for many woodland species.

A few years ago when H. David Bohlen's "Birds of Illinois" was published, I began collecting autographs of birders whose records were published in the book. I asked them to sign next to their best bird. But Todd never autographed my book because he couldn't choose his best bird from among his 65 records that appeared in the book. The Cinnamon Teal, Tricolored Heron, or Ruff he found at Rend Lake would have been worthy, but Todd didn't find them until 1994. The White Ibis foraging with a Willet and American Avocet made the flood of 1993 memorable. But as remarkable as those sightings were for Todd, none of those were his best birds either. The Curve-billed Thrasher we found while scouting for the 1992 Rend Lake CBC earned that title. It was a first state record and a lifer for Todd and me.

Todd greeted a new year eagerly even though he despised winter. To combat the winter blues he invented a game to see if we could find 100 species in Illinois during January. We could. And January become shorter and more exciting.

Todd's Illinois life list included 340 species and in 1994 he joined the very few who have seen more than 300 species in a single year. On May 12, 1995, Todd set a new state warbler record. He saw 33 species in one day.

Todd was a scientist, lister, recruiter, and friend. We will miss him.

Judy K. DeNeal