

(Well, it "was" during the church school hour, not in mid-sermon....)

From the late 1970s until 1997, at least one Bewick's Wren has occurred around Beverly, in southeast Adams County almost every year. Nesting has occurred on at least six occasions, once in a wren box, once in a garage, twice in a barn, once in a dryer vent, and once in a gas grill. Other observers have noticed this wren's propensity for choosing unusual nest sites. See Ridgway (1889), Bohlen (1989), Robinson (1996), and Kennedy (1997).

In 1998, our first record of a Bewick's Wren was an individual

heard on Spring Count Day in Pike County, about 3 miles east of El Dara. The bird was singing near an abandoned house and outbuilding. No attempt was made that day to look for a nest, and the bird could not be located at the end of May. Another bird sang persistently from early May until almost the end of the month 1.5 miles south of Beverly near a barn. While successful nesting had taken place at this location in prior years, no nest was found in 1998 and no young were seen.

The successful nest in the area in 1998 was near the ranger's house at Siloam Springs State Park in eastern

Adams County, about ten miles from Beverly. This pair raised two broods; the first nest was in a gas grill and the second was in a nearby barn.

The ranger and his family were good enough to tolerate a steady stream of birders during late June and early July, and most who sought the birds found them. The available evidence would suggest that at least one Bewick's Wren could nest in the Beverly area in 1999. If we can put out enough gas grills for nesting boxes, perhaps the population will increase and you can all add it to your Illinois lists!

Editor's Note: *Funk's careful note-taking, as well as that of other members of his family, contributes to the knowledge of Illinois' ornithological history. At the time that these notes on the Bewick's Wren were being collected, the species was more common than it is now in the state. This species' numbers have dwindled drastically. Only one or two nesting pairs have been documented anywhere in the state within the past few years, and the species is now on the state-endangered list.*

Although Robinson (1997) doubts the decline of this species is related to competition with House Wrens, Ridgway (1889) and, more recently, several other ornithologists (Kennedy and White 1996, Bartgis 1986, and Wilcove 1990) have felt otherwise. Other possible reasons for this species' decline in Illinois and elsewhere include use of pesticides and competition with other cavity-nesting species including House Sparrows, European Starlings, and Carolina Wrens. See Kennedy and White (1997) for more on this species' distribution.

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