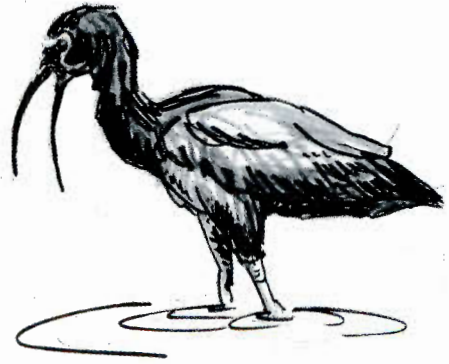


Field Notes: The 2010 Breeding Season

By Steven D. Bailey

Field Notes heading drawing of juvenile White Ibis by Peter Olson.



Weather

The especially warm temperatures of the spring of 2010 were likely a boon to the many bird species which begin their nesting activities during that period, though the few cool spells and heavier-than-average precipitation that went along with it was detrimental to at least a few of these species including Eastern Bluebird. Many nests were abandoned along some east-central Illinois bluebird trails, while young died in other nests and the eggs-to-fledged rate on some trails was only about 50 percent.

March had above normal temperatures (13th warmest since 1895), but below normal precipitation (but included 3-5 inches of snow in Lake and Cook Counties). April temperatures were well above normal—in fact the warmest on record! Precipitation was about normal. The above-normal temperatures and precipitation in May set the stage for the 10th warmest June on record and third warmest April through June on record since documentation began in 1895. Precipitation for June was above average statewide at 7.84 inches (3.77 inches above the normal average), only surpassed by an 8 inch total in 1902. This precipitation, especially in central and northern Illinois counties, was nearly twice the June average statewide. Heaviest rains fell in west-central Illinois with 13.75 inches for the month reported at one Fulton County location. The Mississippi River below Keithsburg and the Illinois River below Ottawa were above local flood stages in June, both peaking near the end of the month all along both rivers. Severe weather was reported across Illinois throughout June, including numerous reports of wind damage and some hail across central Illinois; 15 tornadoes were reported across northern Illinois on 5 June, in Kankakee, Knox, LaSalle, Livingston, Logan, Peoria, Putnam and Tazewell Counties. Such severe weather can be disastrous to breeding birds and their nests, sometimes causing destruction of entire heron rookeries (see Black-crowned Night-Heron account).

Temperatures (19th warmest on record) and precipitation (13th wettest) in July 2010 were again both above average as were stream flows. Average precipitation was 5.58 inches in the state, which was a 1.75-inch surplus

above the average for the month. The eastern areas of the state received the least amount of rainfall, with an average of 3.08 inches, while western areas recorded the greatest rainfall totals with an average of 8.34 inches. Much of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers exceeded local flood stages in July, the lower portions in Illinois remaining above or near local flood stages throughout the month at many locations. The heaviest rains fell in northern and western Illinois, with Elizabeth (JoDaviess County) reporting the most rainfall of any site in Illinois with 14.12 inches for the month. Severe weather was reported across Illinois throughout July including two tornadoes. There were scattered-to-widespread reports of hail and wind damage statewide mid-to-late July. The Mississippi River crested above local flood stages in many areas along the length of the state in July, and was above or near local flood stage at many locations below Keokuk, Iowa throughout the month. The Illinois River began the month above local flood stages from Starved Rock Lock and Dam downstream, and remained so from Havana downstream throughout July.

Vagrants and rare summer occurrences

June and July are usually not the months to expect many rare vagrants in the state but there was a nice mix of a few such rarities, lingering or over-summering migrants (could some have been breeding?). What is almost becoming a regular vagrant since the first state records showed up in 2001 and 2003, a BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK was the highlight of an impressive array of duck species which appeared this summer, including American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Canvasback and Redhead (several areas), Ring-necked Duck (many areas), Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead. The two reports of GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE provided the most reports of this species in a single June/July period, and only the fourth breeding season report ever for this species, with one of the four being an injured bird and another of questionable origin. Likewise, there were more reports and numbers of Snow Geese likely ever reported in Illinois in a single June/July period, with flocks (!) in several areas. As usual though, several were injured birds...apparent hold-