

overs from the winter hunting season, both species' presence a likely consequence of their large build-up of wintering numbers to the tens and even hundreds of thousands in late winter/early spring, though many other sightings were of free-flying birds. The usual couple of basic-plumaged Common Loons were detected again this summer. An EARED GREBE was a nice find, as was the presence of four separate NEOTROPIC CORMORANTS in north, central and southern Illinois...could this be a foreshadowing of breeding in the near future? This bird is now being found most summers in Illinois. American Bottoms was the wading bird capital of Illinois, with most of the highest counts for all of the regular species. Along with good numbers of post-breeding, northward bound "southern" herons, this area played host to a good number and variety of IBIS in June and July including WHITE, GLOSSY and WHITE-FACED as well as a few dark ones that went unidentified. An Arctic Tern and Curlew Sandpiper were also reported but likely will not be acceptable sightings since neither bird was photographed nor otherwise documented, though both identifications were likely correct. Two American Golden Plovers in central and southern Illinois as well as a mid-June MARBLED GODWIT begged the question, were they heading north or south? A GLAUCOUS GULL stayed throughout much of the summer in Lake County.

Boreal forest species provided the four remaining exceptional non-breeding (?) finds, including a singing WINTER WREN, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow and Pine Siskin. I once found a singing Winter Wren at the same latitude as the above bird, in excellent breeding habitat (and close to a breeding pair of Canada Warblers!), but was not able to re-check the site. Interestingly, a pair of Winter Wrens (including a singing male) have been found in Richmond, (east-central) Indiana in mid-June and they have been seen and heard relatively recently, singing on several occasions in the Indiana Dunes, in June and July (Castrale et al. 1998). They have also been confirmed as breeding (including attending young) three times in Iowa, twice fairly recently (late 1980s), once just across the Illinois border in Muscatine County (near the Quad Cities), and another time, also just across the border from Jo Daviess County (in Dubuque County) (Jackson et al. 1996). They have also been confirmed breeding as close as far southern Wisconsin in Wyalusing State Park, and several areas in Richland, Sauk, Waukesha, and Milwaukee Counties during the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas (1995-2000) (Cutright et al. 2006). Eric Walters had one of these singing wrens at Mississippi Palisades SP (Carroll Co) on 29 May 2006, just across the river (both north and south of two of Iowa's breeding occurrences). I'm thinking Lowden-Miller State Forest for Illinois's first breeding confirmation.

Reporting "out of season" breeding occurrences

As usual, since this is the "Breeding Season" report, I continue to list any and all instances of nesting or nesting behavior documented by observers, no matter the date.

Observers have specific dates they are requested to report their observations to the editors since we need to stay on schedule. For me, that means collecting as much of the report's observations by 7 August, basically for the previous months of June and July, since observations between January-May have already been collected and summarized in the Winter and Spring Migration seasons of these field note summaries. However, birds do not schedule their breeding activities within the confines of our schedules, and in the past, a lot of valuable information went unreported because the Great Horned Owls that were sitting on nests with eggs in January, and had mostly full-grown young fledged from nests in April, as well as the Eastern Phoebe and American Woodcocks sitting on eggs in March or the woodpeckers and titmice laying their eggs in April, did not fit nicely within the parameters of the breeding season reporting schedule. Even many of the neotropical migrants (as well as the Gulf Coast short-distance migrants), and a lot of those southern specialty warblers and other species that most northern Illinois folks like to travel to the southern tip of this long state like to see, are already well along with their nest-building and egg-laying well before the last migrants have moved through. A quick check of some of the "Breeding" portions for each species account in the following report will show a fair amount of nesting evidence, not only for the January to May periods, but even August through October. That's a lot of breeding activity that was not-often/ ever covered in the past, but luckily time permits me now to present a lot of this material into the Meadowlark.

Recording and reporting breeding evidence

For those who have never had the opportunity to help on a breeding bird atlas project for a given area, there are a variety of degrees of evidence to "prove" whether a bird species may have nested. While it takes a little more patience and attention to detail in watching birds during the breeding season to do this, if one wishes to confirm that a bird may or may not be breeding, there are a few simple things to watch for on your morning bird walk, which will increase the value of what you see, report, and yes...enjoy when birding. Watching the amazing behaviors that birds go through while performing their various breeding rituals can be some of the more memorable events that you will ever witness while out enjoying your favorite pastime. Though a singing male is often indicative that the species in question is nesting, in most atlas projects, that will only be registered as "possible" evidence of breeding for a species. If you noted a pair (♂ & ♀) moving through the trees together, or possibly courtship or copulation behavior, that is noted as "probable" evidence of breeding. However, nest-building or even carrying nest material (sticks, etc) or a fecal sac, an adult carrying food as it flies off, or of course, seeing a nest with eggs or young "confirms" breeding. If you are witness to such behavior, include that in any notes that you take, and report to the editor. Why is this impor-