

Statewide 1992 Spring Bird Count

by Michael J. Baum

Many county compilers reported excellent species totals while others expressed disappointment after conducting the 21st annual Illinois Spring Bird Count on Saturday 9 May 1992. Karen Forcum of Shelby County said she was "disappointed in the numbers of each species - especially the warblers. We really had to search for the ones we got." Steve Tavender of Scott County noted with marvelous economy, "Beautiful day. Dry. No birds."

Other counters remarked on the good cross section of early and late species, but no one mentioned flocks of grounded transients, hawk flights, or flurries of sandpipers dropping out of the sky. This was a work-ethic day, a day a

dentist would appreciate, a day we went out and made extractions.

Observers from 95 Illinois counties found 257 different species, 8 short of the record and one better than 1991. No new species were added so the total number of species seen on spring bird counts in Illinois remains at 311.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather throughout the state was remarkably uniform. Lows of 39 degrees were posted in Henderson and Scott counties. Whiteside had a high of 87 degrees. Almost everyone else reported a range between 45 and 80 degrees, with full sun all day. No precipitation was recorded and most counties had

light breezes of 5 to 10 miles per hour with variable wind directions.

OBSERVER TOTALS

There were 1,491 observers, 38 below 1990's benchmark. Parties spent 5,128 hours in the field. Coverage within four divided sections of the state was high. Twenty of 23 possible counties participated in area 1; 25 of 28 in area 2; 26 of 27 in area 3; and 24 of 24 in area 4 (Figure 1). Cook County had the most participants at 110. The four counties with the highest number of participants, Cook, Du Page, McHenry, and Will were the same as in previous years.

RARITIES

Twenty-seven species occurred in only 1 county and 10 others in only 2 counties. A photographed male Lark Bunting was the second occurrence for the count. American White Pelican, Oldsquaw, and Ruffed Grouse were all third occurrences.

Additional rarities for this year include 5 King Rails in 3 counties, 7 Black-throated Blue Warblers in 5 counties, 4 Connecticut Warblers in 3 counties, 11 Clay-colored Sparrows in 4 counties, 6 Henslow's Sparrows in 3 counties, and 4 Harris' Sparrows in 3 counties.

SPECIES MISSED

Fifteen species that have been seen on seven or more previous counts were missed this year. They include (with number of years seen in parentheses): Redhead (20 - first time missed); Surf Scoter



One of the rarest finds on the 1992 Spring Bird Count was a King Rail. Five King Rails occurred in three counties. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.