

hidden in the dense vegetation, but when it made an appearance, it definitely put on a show. On the morning of Saturday 22 May, the bird sat in a bare tree and slept for 15 minutes right over a bench, allowing up to 30 observers, including those not able to walk, to get splendid looks at it through Swarovski and Kowa scopes at 60x . . . and only about 20 feet away! At the time, it was estimated that over the four-day long known stay of the bird (19-22 May), at least 300 people came to see it. At least one observer remarked he heard the bird sing. The congregation of birders in the area helped produce some other locally rare birds, including Clay-colored Sparrow, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Connecticut and Mourning Warblers, and a Mississippi Kite. It is interesting to note that a dog-walker/birdwatcher said she spotted the bunting two weeks earlier, but didn't realize it was anything special; we do not know if this statement is valid. The appearance of this species in late May fits the pattern shown in adjacent states and is likely due to overshooting of the breeding grounds. This phenomenon was observed in many other species in spring 1999. Unfortunately, it was not determined whether the bird was from the eastern or western population, which is of particular interest since this species' two allopatric populations may be split into separate species in the future.

### Literature Cited

Gelman, B. 1994. Painted bunting: first confirmed state record. *Meadowlark* 2:127-128. Willard, D., and D. Stotz. 1997. First painted bunting specimen record for Illinois. *Meadowlark* 6: 66.

— Alexandra Latham,  
Sheryl Swartz Soukup,  
and Michael Retter  
Department of Biology  
Illinois Wesleyan University  
P.O. Box 2900  
Bloomington, IL 61702-2900

# The 1999 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count

by Vernon M. Kleen

The 1999 (28<sup>th</sup> annual) Spring Bird Count (which, for the third consecutive year, coincided with the International Migratory Bird Day Count), was held on Saturday, 8 May. Weather forecasts prior to count day projected a gloomy, perhaps even miserable, day, and had birders concerned. However, count day was not nearly as bad as the forecast and Illinois' intrepid counters went out and set several new records (identified in Tables 1, 5, and 6).

Unlike the reasonably calm and mostly clear conditions throughout Illinois on last year's count day, the weather this year was highly variable. Predawn winds (more so in the north) made it difficult to "hoot up" the owls and to hear nocturnal migrants as they passed overhead. Daytime winds (reported mostly from the south to northwest, however, from the northeast in Lake County) ranged from less than 10 mph in the south to instances exceeding 20 mph in the north. Morning temperatures ranged from the upper 40s to low 50s statewide and reached highs in the upper 50s to low 60s in the north and upper 60s to mid 70s in the south. Skies were mostly clear all day in the south, partly cloudy all day in the middle and mostly cloudy to overcast throughout the day in the north. Mists and light showers were also reported in some central and northern counties, but nothing so serious as to interfere with the count.

Over the years it's been learned that the greatest species potential favors the northern counties; those conditions become even more favorable when count day occurs on or

after 7 May. So, it's no surprise this year that of the 17 counties reporting 150 or more species (see TABLE 7 for details), 8 were in the north, 5 were in the central, and only 4 were in the south (and just one of these latter counties reported more than 160 species). Several counties this year achieved their highest ever species total (so, as we've often heard, "less-than-desirable" weather conditions can have a positive influence on birding results). Last year only 10 counties reported 150 species or more; this year 12 achieved 160 or more and Lake County (202) was the only county with 200 or more, 3 short of the state record (205, Lake County, 1983); this was only the 5<sup>th</sup> time any county has achieved 200 or more species.

FIGURE 1 (see page 134) provides a visual record of the county results showing the number of species and number of participants in each county. One of the most useful features of this Figure is that data for specific counties can be readily compared with data from other counties of interest to the reader. The Figure also helps identify those counties where more support might be needed, such as the two counties missing from this year's event.

Every year new records are established; 1999, like 1998, was at best, a mediocre year. TABLE 1 compares, for easy reference, 1999 data with that of 1998 & 1997 along with the record-setting year. Only two records appearing in this table were set in 1999, both were the average number of species reported per county.