

# The 2006 Illinois Spring Bird Count

by *Vernon M. Kleen*

King Rail. Decatur, Macon County.

This photo was taken by Travis A.

Mahan on 5 May 2006, one day before the Illinois Spring Bird Count. The number of King Rails reported on the count was up by 3 birds in 2006.



The 35th annual statewide Spring Bird Count was conducted on Saturday, 6 May. Weatherwise it was a great day – at least for most of the state; the only known exception was the light showers after 6:30 p.m. in the extreme southern counties. In regards to the day, Arlene Brei (Boone County) provided a fitting comment: “Let’s say an avid birder knows it’s his last day on earth and asks for only one thing before he goes – a perfect birding day. Boone Count was gifted with just such a day.” However, she indicated that there was a “down side” to the day as well: “...many of us were literally whining about the lack of warbler species and the fact that, strangely enough, those that were plentiful, particularly Palms, were contrarily 40-50 feet up in the trees, with no wind factor.” And the “down side” was repeated by Jack Armstrong (Winnebago County): “...we had a tough count this year. Very few warblers, thrushes, flycatchers and shorebirds. They either were not here or had flown over us...” and

summed up nicely by Doug Stotz (Bureau County): “...migrant land birds were few and far between during the Spring Bird Count. Later migrating species were poorly represented of course, but in reality so were early migrants. It was clear that migration was delayed, but that early things had mostly gone through—the worst of both worlds.” Despite all this, an excellent number of birds was reported and several new records were set.

With the help of Mike Ward and the Illinois Natural History Survey, we were fully prepared for participation in all 102 counties this year – marking only the third time this goal would have been achieved; as it turned out, the final count was an even 100. [The projected compilers for the two other counties participated elsewhere.] As regularly mentioned, and at least for the present time, the participation goal of all 102 counties is only possible with the support and assistance of several individuals willing to be the “sole” participants in their counties.

This year the seven counties represented by single observers averaged 104 species.

Count day began with early morning temperatures in the low to mid 30s in the northwest (actually freezing in Jo Daviess County) to the upper 40s and low 50s in the south); interestingly, the 55-degree dawn temperatures in Lake & DuPage counties were amongst the highest in the state. Temperatures then peaked in the upper 60s (or barely broke 70) in the north to the upper 60s and lower 70s in the south. Winds were light (mostly less than 10 mph with occasional gusts up to 15 mph) and variable (with no predominate direction, but more reports from the northeast than any other direction). [A northeasterly flow of air would certainly account for the lack of an influx of new migrants.] The sky was overwhelmingly free of clouds (63 counties) for most of the day, and, in some instances, changed to partly cloudy in the afternoon. Only a few counties reported total overcast by late