

four or five of each species in one day. One small wetland held 45 Marsh Wrens, exceeding by nine-fold the typical number seen at this spot.

David B. Johnson found warblers all over Arlington Heights during the same period. The northern Cook County suburb has many mature deciduous trees, but most birds foraged on the ground. Johnson saw 12 species of warblers on the ground, including a Yellow-throated Warbler in the middle of an intersection on one of the town's main streets. The situation was one of those terrible joys of birding. What was good for birders was not necessarily good for the birds. Birders statewide reported desperate birds, Magnolia Warblers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Indigo Buntings vying for seeds at feeders and insectivorous birds fighting for fruit intended for orioles. I laid out fruit for starving birds in Water Tower Park in downtown Chicago for days after 11 May, hoping to keep a few alive long enough for insect production to start. Most of the hundreds of birds unfortunate enough to land on 11 May in this half-block long park in the middle of a concrete canyon were too weak to fly back out and many perished, including four Soras. Several birds died in my hands. An Ovenbird nearly snatched a piece of orange from my hand on 12 May and I observed many other insectivores, such as Black-and-white Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, and Red-eyed Vireo on the ground, feeding on fruit, sandwich bread, and seeds.

### **Record Number of Collected Dead Birds at McCormick Place**

Ironically, one of the better gauges of the quality of a migration season is the quantity of dead birds collected at McCormick Place in Chicago's mid-lakefront area by Dr. David Willard, manager of the Bird Collection at the Field Museum of

Natural History. Willard has been analyzing the number and proportion of bird species killed on the plate glass windows of McCormick Place for 18 years. "It was a very interesting and strange spring migration. I have never seen such a high mortality rate since we began monitoring at McCormick Place," Willard said.

The numbers of dead birds collected from McCormick Place were low to normal during the early part of spring 1996, until the massive migration movement in mid-May. Numbers overall were low until 10 May when huge numbers of warblers, such as Ovenbirds and Nashvilles, were found at the base of the building. McCormick Place's death toll is generally highest among woodland birds, especially sparrows and thrushes, said Willard. But unprecedented numbers of warblers were collected this year, including almost as many Chestnut-sided Warblers found in two days as in the whole of the previous 18 years.

Fall migration usually produces higher numbers than spring of dead birds collected by the Museum. They typically collect between 600 and 700 birds during spring. But the spring of 1996, Museum staff collected double that - about 1,200 individuals of 92 species. The species count was also abnormally high for spring collection at McCormick Place.

Willard said one of his colleagues was walking his dog along Montrose Beach on 9 May, when he noticed thousands of tiny bodies washed up by the surf. The Field Museum staff began to collect beach kills and gathered well over 2,000 birds. In late May, large numbers of Swamp and White-throated sparrows seem to have been caught out over the lake and drowned. House Wrens, vireos, many warbler species, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, two Yellow Rails, an Orchard Oriole, a Summer Tanager, and a King Rail were gathered from the water. Many bodies were so badly deteriorated that the Museum is still

working on identifying them to species. Willard said the winds are usually from the west during spring in Chicago which would tend to carry dead birds away from the city beaches. But this year, the winds were more often from the east and blew the death toll into Chicago.

"It could be mind-boggling if you think about what we found in Illinois and add it to what was happening in Michigan and Indiana," said Willard. "We don't know the effects now on the fall migration or for subsequent years, but if you do have huge flights where high numbers of birds of the same species drowned or were otherwise killed, it could affect the total population of the species, at least for some period of time."

The top ten species found dead at McCormick Place the spring of 1996 in descending order include Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, White-throated Sparrow, Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, European Starling, Dark-eyed Junco, and Veery.

### **Record Dates for Late Migrants**

Clyne's spring weather records show the cold front persisting until 17 May, when a warm front finally moved into Chicago. Many new migrants were downed by the fog created as the warm front hit the cold air stuck over northern Illinois. The fog lifted in Jackson Park by 8:30 a.m. that day, taking many birds with it, but Clyne said some high concentrations of birds remained, particularly Least Flycatcher and Veery. May 1996 was nearly the wettest recorded and cool, rainy weather continued to dominate the northern half of the state through the end of the month. June brought more moderate, typical temperatures, with wetter-than-usual conditions, which may have induced many migrants to stay well beyond their usual departure times to recu-