

The 2007 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count

by *Vernon M. Kleen*

For the first time in Illinois spring bird count history, a Townsend's Warbler was reported. Photo taken at LaBaugh Woods, Evanston, Cook County on 6 May 2007 by Kanae Hirabayashi.



Introduction

The 36th running of Illinois' annual Spring Bird Count, first run in 1972, was completed on Saturday, 5 May 2007. It was a great day for birds, birders and birding. The weather was mild and the birds, at least the edge and woodland species, such as the warblers, vireos, buntings, grosbeaks and sparrows, were so plentiful that several new records were established for the number of counties reporting them. Karen Forcum (Shelby County) reports that "2007 was our best year ever – a perfect day including a fall-out; warblers were low and singing." Although there were good numbers of non-woodland species as well, those numbers failed to reach record status and, as such, leave the impression that birders stopped counting after birding the morning woods. There wasn't a single new shorebird record (does that mean low numbers were present on count day?). Despite the large quantity of birds and fairly large number of birders, the traditionally high species counts for Lake and Cook counties (both of which have exceeded 200 species

in the past) were 20 – 30 species under 200 this year. However, the Townsend's Warbler in Cook County (a first for the count) added excitement. The Golden Eagle (in Montgomery County) was another first for the count. The Black-throated Gray Warbler (in Douglas County) is the second count occurrence for this species, the first was in Cook County in 1984. And, we welcomed back the Gray Partridge (two counties) after a two-year hiatus as well as the Bewick's Wren. Central Illinois birders were somewhat plagued by biting insects locally called "buffalo gnats" – as a result, some observers specifically mentioned that they spent more time birding by car than they did walking.

Once again, with the help of Mike Ward and the Illinois Natural History Survey, we fully anticipated participation in all 102 counties this year – compilers and observers were confirmed. Unfortunately, as last year, we ended up two counties short. We appreciate the support and assistance of those individuals (often serving as the sole participant) who helped achieve this goal –

especially those who traveled quite some distance. This year the nine counties represented by a single observer reported from 55 to 160 species; their average was 106 species.

Results and Discussion

Count day began with early morning temperatures in the low to mid 50s in the northwest and the upper 50s to low 60s in the south. Temperatures peaked in the mid to upper 60s and low 70s in the north to the upper 70s and low 80s in the south. Winds were mostly light (less than 10 mph with occasional gusts up to 25-30 mph) and highly variable (but nearly half the reports indicating they were from the east or southeast). The morning sky was mostly cloudy to overcast (73 counties); however, by afternoon the sky had changed to partly cloudy to clear. An early to mid-morning fog was reported from 29 mid-state counties. Fourteen counties, in the northeast and extreme southeast, reported a trace of rain during the early morning hours; however, it did not interfere with the birding.