



# The 2004 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count

by Vernon M. Kleen

The Spring Bird Count, scheduled annually for the Saturday which falls on or between 4 and 10 May, was held 8 May 2004. The count, formalized through the Illinois Audubon Society in 1972, has run for 33 consecutive years. Several individuals have served as county compilers for the first count in 1972 and are still serving as compilers today. That's dedication. Through the years county compilers have also garnered newspaper accounts from their local papers and submitted them along with their reports. These articles have not only informed local folks about the dedicated efforts and accomplishments of count compilers and participants, but also helped them learn more about birds and birding, and, in several instances, attracted them as new count participants.

Count day 2004 was like 2003, a very pleasant and rewarding day for birding, perhaps a bit windy in some areas, but, nevertheless, a good day. (*I have a feeling, though, that some of you in the 2003 tornado alley in central Illinois may have a different opinion.*) Early morning tempera-

*An adult male Blue Grosbeak sets up territory on the Williamson/Saline County line during the 2004 Spring Bird Count. Photo taken 8 May 2004 by Eric Walters.*

tures for 2004 ranged from the low 50s in the north to the mid-to-upper 50s in the south and climbed to the low-to-mid 80s in the north and mid-to-upper 80s in the south, certainly one of the warmest ever Spring Bird Counts. The sky, for the most part, was clear or mostly clear throughout the day in all but the extreme northern portion of the state where it started off partly cloudy then did change to mostly clear. The wind ranged from negligible to gusts up to 30 mph; the majority of southern reports had south to southwest breezes less than 10 mph, middle counties had winds from the south to southwest in the 10-20 mph range and northern counties had winds from the southeast to the southwest in the 5-30 mph range then changing in the late afternoon to north and northeast (especially Lake and Cook counties).

Owling and nocturnal counting began precisely at midnight (0000) in three counties (Clinton, De Kalb and Franklin), had begun by 3 a.m. (0300) in ten more counties, and by 5 a.m. (0500) in another 52 counties. In all, 66 counties reported at least some (owling time normally referred to as owling hours prior to dawn. Owling time was also reported by 27 counties after dusk (from approximately 8:30 p.m. to midnight).

Spring Bird Count goals include having at least one team (preferably two or more) and five or more observers in all 102 counties, and receiving a confirmed list of 100 or more species from every county on count day. Based on that, we did reasonably well. As noted in times past, these goals are a challenge, but, achievable. In 2004 we did manage

to have at least one team in 101 counties (99% success — in seven counties the team consisted of just a single observer), five or more observers in 70 counties (69% success) and 100 or more species in 80 counties (78% success — which ties the best we've ever done). However, on close scrutiny, you will note that the records of two counties have been included in these results that did not meet the minimum duration of count standard of eight or more daylight hours of counting. So, in reality, if we based the results on the minimum standards, the success rate of the first part of the first goal would be only 97%. [*Editorial comment: it's obviously important that all results submitted each year be included in these annual reports; however, it's also important that the minimum standards for doing the count should be met.*]

## Results and Discussion

**Highest County Counts.** Since count day was only two days short of being as late in May as it could be, the northern counties were, once again, at an advantage and, as expected, achieved the highest totals. Cook County, which recorded the highest species total in 2003 (192), was nosed out by Lake County this year, 184 to 183 species, despite having 2( times as many observers. Du Page County was right there, too, with 181 species. Twenty more counties reported 150 or more species: Carroll (171), Winnebago (171), Knox (170), Clinton (168), Union (166), Massac (165), Champaign (164), Williamson (164), Fayette (163), McHenry (160), Will (160), Mason (159), Jo Daviess (158), Mercer (156), Brown (155), La

**Meadowlark**