

# The 1996 Illinois Spring Bird Count

by Peter C. Petersen

This year's early date did not bode well for the 1996 Spring Bird Count. Scouting trips at my latitude (41 degrees) had poor results. Reports came in of large numbers of May migrants in Missouri west of St. Louis, but a series of fronts blocked northward movement. However, many April migrants lingered, and results were better than expected for many locations. As La Salle County compiler John McKee said, "With the early count and late spring, I wasn't expecting to do very well. Amazingly, however, our 174 species is a new count record."

The weather, similar to 1995 but much better than 1994, was generally cool with rain and light wind in some locations.

Despite the cool, late spring, counters recorded a new species high of 269, and a new high count of individuals of 593,680, about 40,000 more than 1995. The number of observers, 1521, was 27 less than in 1995.

Nine counties recorded more than 160 species: Cook 191, Union 186, Will 182, Clinton 177, Lake 176, La Salle 174, Madison 168, Du Page 163, and Knox 162. Thirty-one counties recorded 140 species or more. In contrast, the following Saturday on the nationwide count, two of us recorded 187 species in an Iowa county, plus three more in a neighboring county. Both were along the Mississippi River. These numbers represent an Iowa record, probably due to the big migrant wave on 9 May 1996.

TABLE 1 — Annual Comparisons

Numbers	1996	1995	1994	Highest Total
Species	269	266	265	269 (1996)
Individual Birds	593,680	554,828	497,170	593,680 (1996)
Participating Counties	96	97	99	102 (1986)
Observers	1,521	1,548	1,377	1,548 (1995)
Party Hours Walked	3,300	3,378	2,936	3,378 (1995)
Party Hours Driven	2,025	2,042	2,053	2,053 (1994)
Total Party Hours	5,325	5,420	4,989	5,420 (1995)
Party Miles Walked	2,525	2,628	2,049	2,628 (1995)
Party Miles Driven	21,446	22,052	21,503	22,052 (1995)
Total Party Miles	23,971	24,680	23,552	24,680 (1995)
Species in 90% or more counties	55	47	49	55 (1996)
Counties with 100 or more species	76	76	74	76 (2 yrs)
Counties with 20 or more observers	22	23	19	23 (3 yrs)



Willet, Evanston's Northwestern University, Cook Co. 18 May 1996, a late date for this species. Photo by Eric Walters.