

(168 miles added to the previous record) and the total number of party miles of participation (walked and driven — 366 miles added to the previous high). Translated, this year's SBC birders, even though fewer in number, spent much more time driving in search of birds than any previous year. The 257 recorded species is the lowest we've had since 1993 when we only had 254. Over the 30-year span of the Spring Bird Count (beginning in 1972), there were 5 years when the statewide species total was less than 250 (lowest was 241 in 1974); 13 years when it ranged from 250 to 259; and 12 years when it ranged from 260 to 269 (the highest occurred in 1996). The average for the 30-year period is 257.7 species and the median is 257. So the year 2001 was a very average year. When grouping the counts in 5-year averages (Figure 3), the average annual species total was only about 250 species in the early years, then fluctuated between 253 and 260 for the next 16 years, then climbed to 265 in recent years (1994-2000); however, the average for the last 5-year period dropped back to 262 species per year. A lot of these changes can be attributed to the gain in species referenced in the introduction.

Table 2. Table 2 lists, in descending order, the 19 counties with 20 or more observers; Cook and Du Page are the only two that consistently have 100 or more observers. All county coordinators (not just the 19 above) are hereby acknowledged and congratulated for their willingness and ability to line up volunteers and for assigning territories that are designed to keep the birders busy and productive all day so they don't have to leave their areas to "poach" on other birder's territories and duplicate data. For that matter, all birders should be acknowledged and congratulated, and especially so for staying within their delineated territories rather than running about everywhere and helping to maintain the integrity of the SBC data. Despite the aforementioned congratulations, there have been rumors that some birders do leave their delineated territories and do poach on other areas; in addition, rumor has it that these same birders count the time and miles spent birding in areas for which data have already been gathered. Such

Five-Year Average Statewide Species Count From 1972-2001

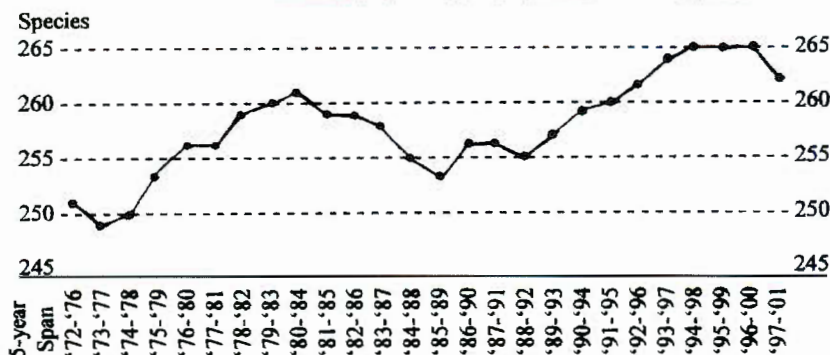


Figure 3.

rumors do bring to mind a couple of questions that apply mostly to the counties that are well-endowed with observers. First, since every county has a finite amount of birding territory, and, since efficient birders don't always need an entire day to cover their delineated areas (sometimes finishing before noon), what do such birders do for the remainder of the afternoon/evening without poaching? Secondly, if the territory sizes are limited and the birders have finished their assigned areas by noon and stop counting birds at that time (hence, only morning birding hours recorded for the SBC), would the information they submit be heavily biased in favor of the birds that are most active in the morning and be biased against those species more active later in the day? Any thoughts or comments?

Expanded birding opportunities. Perhaps some birders out there, especially those in the counties well-endowed with observers, would like to expand their horizons a bit, or, experience a larger, more flexible SBC territory, or just do something different. If you are one of these, your assistance would be very welcome in any of the lesser-endowed counties. In addition, such assistance would help us get closer to the two specific statewide goals. Please let me know if you'd be willing to help outside your home county (if your home county will be adequately covered without your assistance).

Table 3. Table 3 provides the usual comparison of birding effort in each south-to-north quarter of the state (identified as Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4 in

Figure 1). The 2001 information shows that the average number of party hours per county was 50.27, about 2.75 hours less per county than in 2000, and 4.25 hours less than the 1997 record.

Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 lists the 52 species that were found in 90 or more counties. Thirteen (25%) were found in all 101 reporting counties and another five were found in all but one county. Table 5 presents the annual list of the 20 most common species in descending order. The Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle remain No. 1 and No. 2, respectively. The robin and starling reversed their traditional spots of being the 3rd and 4th most common and the Ring-billed Gull, which is recorded in high numbers periodically (such as the 14,000+ in Cook County this year) jumped up to 5th position this year (ahead of the House Sparrow and Canada Goose) and is common enough about 50% of the time to be listed in this table. The next six species have nearly the same numbers and are in the same descending order as last year. The Barn Swallow and Tree Swallow jumped to the No. 3 and No. 4 positions, respectively, since last year, but their totals fluctuate annually. The Yellow-rumped Warbler, too, fluctuates enough to be on and off the list about 50-60% of the time; this year it achieved 15th position. The Indigo Bunting, Mallard, Chimney Swift, and Palm Warbler (the latter on the list for only the fourth time) round out the top 20. From all appearances, a species total needs to be 5,000 or more to make this annual list (the next five below the top 20 ranged from 4,700 to