

We watched loons doing flattened-out threat displays, surface rushes, and penguin dances as a prelude to their migration to more northerly lakes. I had never before heard Common Loons calling during migration in Illinois.

- David B. Johnson, 504 Crown Point Drive, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089.

White-faced Ibis at Gilman

On the evening of 2 May 1992, I received a telephone call from Richard Biss, who operates the Chicago Audubon Society Rare Bird Alert. A dark ibis had been seen by a motorist at the Gilman exit of I-57 in Iroquois County. Since Gilman is down state and less than an hour from my home, he asked if I would look for the bird. The next morning I drove to Gilman, wondering what I would find since not much ibis habitat exists there.

At dawn I approached the Gilman exit. A large pond for a tree nursery on the east side of the highway looked promising, but I decided first to check the southbound exit where the bird was said to have been seen. As I crossed the overpass, I spotted a small puddle in the grassy triangle between the southbound lanes and the southbound exit. In that puddle was the ibis, proving that it pays to check all available habitat.

It was overall glossy brown and appeared to have red legs. A close look with a spotting scope confirmed the red legs and showed the red eye and thin white line surrounding the bill identifying it as a White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihî*).

By 7 a.m. I had spread the word to the Chicago Audubon Society Rare Bird Alert and to local birders in Champaign-Urbana. Although the bird only remained for the day, Richard Biss, Andy Sigler, and several other birders managed to see it.

- Robert Chapel, 306 1/2 West California, Urbana, IL 61801.

Editor's note: This sighting represents the eleventh spring record for Illinois.

Yellow Rail: A Hands-on Experience

Rick Wright had never seen a Yellow Rail (*Coturicops noveboracensis*) when he moved to Urbana in 1991. So when one was seen in a field at the Henning Road Strip Mine Ponds in Vermilion County in April 1991, he and I made the requisite trek through thick wet grass and shallow cattails, but to no avail. The mines are located one mile northeast of I-74 and US-150 on the outskirts of Danville.

As mid-April 1992 approached, we again prepared to work the Henning Road field since Yellow Rails had been found there in 1989 and 1991.

We knew the routine. We had to cover the field meticulously, zig-zagging over nearly every square inch. The bird would sit still, and if we were lucky enough to find one, we would flush it when we were almost directly on top of it. We would then see the bird briefly, catching a look at its distinctive wing pattern as it landed, and then probably not get another view that day.

On 11 April 1992, the unexpected happened. After covering the field for about half an hour, I noticed a movement at my feet. It was a Yellow Rail. I called Rick who also saw the bird. The rail began to slink rapidly through the grass, working back and forth, disappearing, only to reappear a few feet behind us. After a few minutes, when the bird had still not flushed, I reached down and actually grabbed the bird briefly before it compressed its feathers and squirmed from my grasp. It flew from my hands to freedom, giving us an excellent view of its wings.

- Robert Chapel, 306 1/2 West California, Urbana, IL 61801.

Editor's Note: Birders are not encouraged to touch healthy, wild birds.

Winnebago County's First Piping Plover

The telephone was ringing 26 April 1992 as we unlocked the back door and hauled the suitcases into the kitchen. The caller thought that we might want to know that a Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) was spotted at Winnebago pond just west of the intersection of Trask Bridge Road (Route 70) nine miles northwest of Rockford. We were on our way without unpacking the rest of the car.

Ten minutes later we found a group of birders at the pond. Several were already leaving, but they assured us that the others had the bird fixed in their scopes. The late afternoon light made viewing difficult. Still we got satisfactory views of a basic plumaged Piping Plover as it darted in and out from low spots and vegetation while feeding.

At noon the next day we returned and relocated the bird. It fed on worms plucked from the flooded field while we watched at close range. We had a leisurely look at a small, very pale, grayish brown plover with a short, stubby, all black bill and orange legs. A pale collar separated the back from the similarly colored nape. A dark eye was distinctive against a white face with a pale sand-colored cap and sides of the face. A faint white superciliary extended a short distance behind the eye. The bird lacked black banding or head