

Grebe in mid-June was quite unusual. Unfortunately, the recovering breeding population of Sandhill Cranes was negatively affected by flooded, low-lying marshes in Winnebago County and in the heart of their Illinois range in northeastern Illinois. Many pairs without colts were spotted throughout June and July in these areas.

Hérons appeared to partly benefit from the extensive flooding during the season, with American Bitterns being especially widespread, with one even in southern Illinois. Both bitterns and most members of the rail family seemed to be extremely delayed in their migrations throughout April and May due to extended bad weather, with the apparent result that many decided to just stop in the many "recharged" wetlands to attempt breeding. However, some may have abandoned typical breeding sites when waters became too deep to feed in. Unfortunately, Snowy and Cattle Egrets and Little Blue Herons were not found at their usual southwestern Illinois rookeries, but many did appear as post-breeding wanderers in the heavily flooded areas near the Mississippi River. One major breeding area near Chautauqua NWR was abandoned for the second year in a row, perhaps partly due to water that was too deep for feeding during most of the summer.

Observers reported numerous King and Virginia Rails, and the state-endangered **Black Rail** was detected at three distinct sites. Soras were found into late May and early June, even in downstate marshes where they are not usually noted after mid-May, and may have attempted nesting there. High rainfall totals and the recharging of formerly shallow or dried-up wetlands also created more breeding habitat in new areas for American Coot, which is fairly uncommon as a breeding species. The sodden conditions in southeastern Illinois may have encouraged a few Wilson's Snipe to remain to nest substantially far south of their normal breeding range within the state. A few other shorebirds were seen well into June as well, making it a bit hard to tell if they were coming or going.

Illinois's four state-endangered species of nesting terns showed little success, due to a variety of negative impacts on their breeding attempts. Flooding along the Mississippi River took away virtually all the usual habitat available to Illinois's breeding population of the federally endangered Least Tern. However, acceptable areas were utilized by this species along gravel roads in Jackson County. Unfortunately, when these roads were closed off by the USF&WS to protect the nesting terns, the terns and their nests mysteriously disappeared. Illinois's sole Common Tern colony once again failed due to Great Horned Owl predation, while breeding Black Terns were found only at their most regular breeding location.

The future continues to look bleak for the state-threatened Loggerhead Shrike, with breeding numbers apparently declining in one of its last strongholds in the southeastern portion of the state. A pair of **Bewick's Wrens**, now nearly extirpated in Illinois, bred once again at their usual site, while **Swainson's Warbler** was singing on territory at a new location in Alexander County. Quite unexpected for the summer season was an **American Pipit in mid-June**.

Informative research efforts

Thanks to all of those observers who take the time to tally and submit counts of various species found during the Breeding Bird Survey Routes that they conduct each summer. They provide excellent baseline data of numbers which can be compared with similar routes conducted throughout the state, as the routes all have the same number of census stops, the same duration of census stops (3 minutes), and all are conducted at approximately the same time. Over enough time, they can show significant trends in increases or declines in numbers of many species of birds.

Although American White Pelicans have not yet been found nesting in Illinois, the picture of their post-nesting movements is becoming clearer. Modest numbers (< 100 individuals) of summering pelicans at Chautauqua NWR begin to build quickly in July, as documented by regular censuses conducted by Richard & Sigurd Bjorklund for the last several years. A tally of 105 pelicans on 11 July rose to 1,096 on 16 July. Where do they come from?

Due to the efforts of Tara Beveroth with the Illinois Natural History Survey and her group of volunteer monitors, we received some quality information statewide on a variety of night birds. This was the first year of a project, flagged in the field notes as MOON (Monitoring Of Owls & Nightjars), designed to provide a clearer picture on the apparent declines (or future increases) of nocturnal species. There has been a large gap in our knowledge of such species for many years. Hopefully, volunteers who helped in 2008 will continue to do so in future years.

A radio telemetry study of Soras in the Champaign area in east-central Illinois showed the effects of the cold and stormy weather in late spring and early summer. One Sora departed into a head wind in a rainstorm one evening. Another moved from the Champaign area to marshland just southeast of Moline, in a more westerly movement than one might expect.

Through his extensive banding activities, Vern Kleen is showing just how numerous post-breeding Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are in late summer in Illinois in localized areas near hummingbird feeders.

In Vermilion County, Mark Alessi found Prairie Warblers to be even more common than in previous years at Illinois's northernmost regular breeding outpost. Alessi also monitored a large number of nesting Yellow-breasted Chats at his study site, but nest success there was very poor, with less than one in ten nests fledging young.

Through volunteer nest-box monitoring and special studies, several early cavity-nesting passerines, including Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, and Prothonotary Warblers, were found to have been negatively affected in various ways during the cool, wet weather of the early breeding season.

Expanding ranges

Ospreys continue to nest successfully in several areas and seem to be slowly increasing as a breeding species. Bald Eagles are also becoming a more common sight in summer over much of the state, even within agricultural areas and heavily urbanized northeastern Illinois, with a new nest found in spring 2008 at Chain-O-Lakes State Park in McHenry County. Eagles were also seen flying over Lake and Cook Counties, where they formerly were not often noted even in migration, let alone during the summer. As the numerous reports published in this summary illustrate, Cooper's Hawk has reclaimed (surpassed?) its previous widespread range and abundance as a breeder within the state, especially in suburban areas. For the second straight summer, a Merlin showed up in the northeast corner of the state at the end of July. Merlins have become dramatically more common (especially in towns) in winter in Illinois and in several other Midwestern states just within the last decade or so. They are also becoming more common as a breeding species in Wisconsin, with increasing reports from more southerly sites in summer, coupled with a new trend of breeding in towns, similar to many populations of breeding Mississippi Kites.

Birders continue to document the spread of the Eurasian Collared-Dove throughout all areas of the state, at least in small numbers. It will be interesting to see just how common they become.

The continued presence (including pairs) of Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins in June and July after impressive