

Goldfinch (-43%) and Northern Cardinal (-26%); this methodology would also indicate substantial declines for other **Top 20** species: Brown-headed Cowbird (-23%), Blue Jay (-43%), and American Crow (-47%) and for selected **non-Top 20** species such as: Red-headed Woodpecker (-24%), Red-bellied Woodpecker (-24%), Downy Woodpecker (-28%), Pileated Woodpecker (-29%), Carolina Chickadee (-21%), Black-capped Chickadee (-54%), Tufted Titmouse (-42%), White-breasted Nuthatch (-45%), Chipping Sparrow (-18%), and House Finch (-42%). However, since the Table 5 numbers do not reflect annual differences such as 1) an increase or decrease in the number of participating counties, participating observers, or party hours; 2) variable weather conditions from year to year and region to region within the state; 3) whether or not the same counters are responsible for counting in the same locations at the same time each year; and 4) the accuracy of counting (or estimating) from year to year, it's difficult to prove from these numbers that there have been "statistically significant" population changes locally, regionally or statewide from one year to the next. However, increasing or decreasing trends over several years may be possible. So, the question that still needs an answer is, might some of these reduced numbers be a result of West Nile Virus? We can certainly see that some species were definitely less common in 2003 than they were in 2002 or earlier; but that does not necessarily mean West Nile Virus was the cause.

Table 6 is a synopsis of the entire 2003 count. It shows the number of counties reporting each species, the total number of birds of each species reported, the highest number of each species reported from a single county and the new records set this year. The 18 species reported from a single county have been **bold faced** and the **GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (Carroll County) is further emphasized by capital letters since it was a new

count species and ranks high as one of the most interesting records of 2003. Some of the other notable single-county records, which made it possible for the statewide count to reach 268 species included Tricolored Heron (3rd year) (Alexander County), Northern Goshawk (5th year) (Henry County), Gray Partridge (De Kalb County), Yellow Rail (Menard County), Black Rail (7th year) (Vermilion County), Red-necked Phalarope (5th year) (Sangamon County), Long-eared Owl (family of 4) (9th year) (Rock Island County), Bewick's Wren (Wabash County), and Pine Siskin (Wabash County). Some of the better records of the 18 species reported from just two counties include Ross's Goose, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Laughing Gull, Western Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

New records

As mentioned earlier, Table 6 also identifies all count records. The 74 new records have been identified by an asterisk (*) and the 17 records that tied the previous high have been identified by the pound (#) sign. *Ten new records increased the number of counties reporting the species; some of the largest or most interesting county increases were for the: American White Pelican (up 6 counties), Mississippi Kite (up 5 counties), Black-necked Stilt (up 1 county); Monk Parakeet (up 1 county – Clinton), and Henslow's Sparrow (up 5 counties).* Perhaps there would have been several more records had there been participants in one or more of the nine absent counties. *Thirty-seven new records increased the total number of birds reported for those species in a single count year; some of the largest and most interesting gains (followed by the*

TABLE 5 – Twenty Most Common Species

Species	2003	2002	2001	Highest	# Years In Top 20
Red-winged Blackbird	61,845	64,274	64,459	69,971 (1996)	32
Common Grackle	32,584	36,591	34,124	59,264 (1974)	32
European Starling	28,077	32,105	30,111	37,736 (1992)	32
American Robin	26,000	33,808	32,795	35,720 (1995)	32
Ring-billed Gull	20,806	18,728	19,968	29,243 (1994)	19
House Sparrow	16,554	32,120	19,459	32,120 (2002)	32
Canada Goose	15,585	16,448	16,267	19,031 (2000)	18
Mourning Dove	12,388	10,551	10,582	12,388 (2003)	32
American Goldfinch	10,383	18,240	14,810	18,240 (2002)	31
Northern Cardinal	10,229	13,895	11,122	13,895 (2002)	32
Barn Swallow	9,606	6,875	10,295	27,532 (1999)	31
Tree Swallow	9,426	7,601	9,444	24,573 (1989)	18
Brown-headed Cowbird	8,887	11,564	9,544	12,542 (1995)	32
Indigo Bunting	8,782	*5,124	*7,694	8,782 (2003)	14
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6,807	8,006	8,733	17,978 (1997)	20
Double-crested Cormorant	6,776	9,748	*4,338	9,748 (2002)	4
Blue Jay	6,693	11,655	8,150	13,446 (1984)	32
Common Yellowthroat	5,819	*3,486	*4,686	5,819 (2003)	1
American Crow	5,738	10,794	11,915	13,226 (1991)	32
White-throated Sparrow	5,730	*5518	*3,694	12,767 (1996)	13

New Records in **Bold Face**. * = Not in "Top 20" this year.