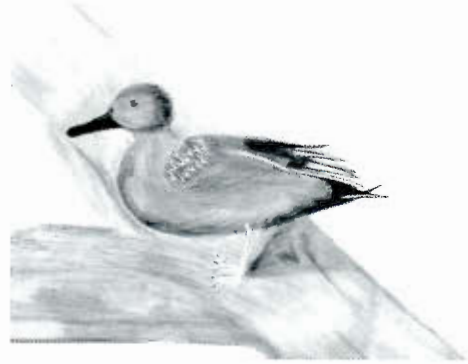


Field Notes: The 2010 Spring Migration Season

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Cinnamon Teal drawing by Nandu Dubey.



February was unusually cold, and these sub-normal temperatures remained in the first week of March. A rush of warm, southerly air arrived in the second week of March, but the migrants it brought were not ahead of schedule. The next big warm front didn't arrive until the very end of March. Southerly winds then persisted through the first week of April, ushering in extremely warm temperatures that were maintained throughout the month. In fact, April 2010 was the warmest April on record for Illinois. Strong winds accompanied several fronts during this period, but observers failed to note any large waves of migrants arriving with the warm weather until finally, at the end of April and into early May, significant movements were seen. Then, in the middle of May, temperatures dipped below normal for nearly two weeks across much of the state, followed by a final strong warm front toward the end of the month.

The following summary of the spring migration period remarks on aspects that are significant in regard to numbers or timing of migration for individual species. No overall pattern of earliness or lateness of the migration was apparent, nor were numbers generally large or small for any groups.

Most impressive among the northward movement of geese was the aggregation of 133,000 Snow Geese on Lake Springfield the first week of March, with an estimated 1000 to 2000 Ross's Geese mixed in. This is the largest flock of Ross's Geese on record for the state. Peak numbers of Trumpeter Swans, Long-tailed Ducks, and Common Goldeneye were also higher than typical, but otherwise there were no notably high counts of waterfowl.

There were no reports of Gray Partridge. There have been only four reports involving 11 individuals of this species during the spring season over the last 18 years, the most recent in 1999. The passage of Red-throated Loons was not as strong as last year, but good numbers were still observed. However, no large counts of Common Loons were made this season. The peak tally of Black-crowned Night-Herons came as expected from the Lake Calumet colony in Chicago; however, the total of 113 was less than half of recent years' counts and less than a tenth of those from 15-20 years ago. The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron found the first week of March in southern Illinois was a month

ahead of schedule. A Black Vulture was photographed in Vermilion County, well north of the species's normal range.

At least six different Piping Plovers were reported, with three present at once on Waukegan Beach, making for a strong seasonal movement. Killdeer were somewhat late to arrive this year. An exceptional 144 Spotted Sandpipers eclipsed previous high counts for this species. Excellent numbers of Hudsonian Godwits were topped by numerous and widespread reports of Wilson's Phalaropes. An incredible 210 Wilson's Phalaropes were seen in early May in Mason County. Red-necked Phalaropes were seen in above average numbers as well, with nine noted by observers. Franklin's Gulls were late arriving in the state. The less common "winter" gulls were reported in poor numbers this spring, with the exception of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The Black Tern flight was amazing, with 3000 noted at Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge.

The large number of Barn Owl reports received was encouraging. The species was noted at seven different southern Illinois locations, two adults and four young were found in Jasper County, and a pair was using a nest box further north in Iroquois County.

Greater than typical numbers of Western Kingbirds were seen, with five reports at locations away from their known breeding sites. Just one Scissor-tailed Flycatcher report is below the norm. The record spring high count of 33 Sedge Wrens from Iroquois County Conservation Area may be a reflection more of effort rather than a notable movement of the birds, as the observers walked much of the property to make the tally.

For the most part peak counts for warblers were in the normal range. Exceptions on the plus side were for Magnolia, Prairie, and Palm Warblers, while numbers were low for Cape May, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, and Wilson's Warblers. Warblers as a group arrived in the state just a little late (two days on average). Cape May, Palm, Blackpoll, and Kentucky Warblers were each about a week late. On the other hand, Orange-crowned and Canada Warblers were five days ahead of schedule.

Most notable among counts for sparrows were the 14 Lark Sparrows tallied at Nachusa Grasslands; this is one of the largest totals for this species in spring. No sizeable flocks