

2002, another 14 Mar 1961, and records from June in 1979, 1951, and 1895. Dunlin made an early splash into the state. The bird seen 20 Mar in Marion County by Leroy Harrison provided the third earliest arrival ever and the two birds in Sangamon County found 26 Mar by Dave Bohlen were the fourth earliest for central Illinois. This spring's three March records involving 14 Dunlins join the prior 14 March records involving 22 birds. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper 24 May at Chicago's Montrose Point was just the ninth spring record for the state.

The American Woodcock on 20 Jan reported by Leroy Harrison in southeast Illinois was thought to be an early migrant. If so, this may be a record early date. Another contender for that distinction is a bird noted 19 Jan 1985 (Kleen, 1986). Though there are four records of American Woodcock from the first six days of January, the historic record shows a gap with no sightings from 7 Jan to 18 Jan of any year. The possibility of birds attempting or actually managing to winter is difficult to exclude, nonetheless. The one published record that suggests this may happen concerns reference to one to three woodcocks in Massac County reported by Frank's bird fits the pattern of many early arrivals, but also could reflect the impact of a mild winter.

The incredible invasion of Snowy Owls during the 2011/2012 winter including some late lingering birds. Among them were three individuals that stayed into May. The birds noted 14 May and 11 May are now the first and second latest on record, and the one on 5 May the fifth latest. There are only two prior May records for the species: 9 May 1964 and 8 May 2002. Also very late was a Northern Saw-whet Owl photographed in a Champaign County garage by Gene Campbell. Only two prior May records exist, and this year's is the latest.

Hands down, the bird of the season was the flycatcher discovered and photographed by Aaron and Ethan Gyllenhaal in Oak Park, Cook County, on 17 Apr. When photos were posted to the internet, Nathan Goldberg suggested the bird was an *elaenia*, setting off "Elaenia Mania" for the remainder of the bird's visit, which lasted to 22 Apr. While a conclusive identification to species has not yet been made, evidence is currently leaning toward Small-billed *Elaenia*, which would constitute a first record for the United States. The other possibility is White-crested *Elaenia*, in which case this would be a second United States record.

Of the six regularly occurring vireo species, five posted notably early arrivals this spring. An early White-eyed Vireo seen 19 Mar by Keith McMullen at Mermet Lake Conservation Area beat the previous record arrival date by one day and provided just the fifth March date for the species in Illinois, all of which have occurred in the southern portion of the state. Frank Bennett's sighting on 28 Mar, also at Mermet Lake, provided a sixth March record. Early as well was the Yellow-throated Vireo on 31 Mar, which is but the fifth March record. Furthermore, there are only nine dates for Bell's Vireo that are earlier than this year's sighting on 28 Apr. Seven of these occurred in the last six years, which lies in the period of the Southernmost Illinois Birding Blitz. That event may encourage more effort for locating early arrivals of this species. The Warbling Vireo found by Keith McMullen 31 Mar at Mermet Lake Conservation Area was record-early by two days, and McMullen's Red-eyed Vireo on 6 Apr at Pomona in Jackson County was record-early by three days.

Swallows arrived early as well. The only records earlier than the Purple Martins seen 2 Mar are of birds 24 Feb 1923 (see Bohlen (1989)) and 1 Mar 2008. The Northern Rough-winged Swallow seen this year on 18 Mar provided a sighting earlier than all others except for one 16 Mar 1996. Bank Swallows arrived six

days earlier than average. Providing the second earliest arrival date were five Cliff Swallows 19 Mar, and a Barn Swallow 5 Mar tied the 2nd earliest arrival date for the species.

Three very early House Wrens were noted 22 Mar, 29 Mar, 30 Mar. The only other March dates for the species are cited in Bohlen (1989): 16 Mar 1982, 26 Mar from early in the 20th century, and 31 Mar 1986. Two Marsh Wrens were seen in southern Illinois in early March. In the literature, the earliest date noted for migrant birds is 20 Mar, so these would be record early migrants unless they represent wintering individuals. However, there were no winter reports of Marsh Wren from the areas where these were reported.

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher seen by Frank Bennett on 17 Mar set a new record arrival date. Furthermore, the two gnatcatchers seen 25 Mar apparently represent the 5th and 6th earliest records, but see below. Records earlier than 25 Mar include 23 Mar 2011 (2) from Montrose Point, 23 Mar 2011 in Johnson County, 22 Mar 2009 in Urbana. The 22 Mar 2009 was noted in Mahan (2009) as the 2nd earliest arrival date, but the review of the literature done in preparation of this report did not turn up any earlier date.

The *Catharus* flight was considered by several reporters to be quite poor. Lower than usual high counts of Gray-cheeked Thrush and Swainson's Thrush appear to bear these observations out, but Hermit Thrush totals in contrast seemed strong.

The last Snow Buntings noted were seen 24 Feb. This departure is a month ahead of the average 21 Mar departure date.

Six of the 36 species or warblers seen this spring had notably early or record early dates. There are only four earlier records of Ovenbird (4 Apr 1969 and 14 Apr of 1986, 1992, and 2002) than this year's 15 Apr 2012 bird. The Worm-eating Warbler noted 6 Apr tied the record early date from 1977. The Louisiana Waterthrush 14 Mar was the state's third earliest, bested only by birds seen 11 Mar 1986 and 12 Mar 2011. The Black-and-white Warbler seen 21 Mar by Dave Bohlen in Springfield, the two seen 25 Mar at Ft. Massac State Park by Keith McMullen, and the ones 29 Mar in New Columbia in Massac County found by Frank Bennett and in Whiteside County by Dan Williams were all notably early. Prior to this season there were only nine March occurrences of Black-and-white Warbler. Of these, eight were during the range from 29 to 31 Mar, with the remaining one on the record early date of 16 Mar set in 2003 at Carlyle Lake. Birds seen 29 Mar 1981 and 1991 in Springfield by Dave Bohlen and 29 Mar 2003 in Waukegan by Joan Bruchman were the only March records outside the southern tier, so that Dave Bohlen's bird this year posted a new record-early date for central Illinois and Dan Williams's bird tied the record date for northern Illinois. The total number of March records for the species jumped from nine to 13 in just one year. Keith McMullen located two Prothonotary Warblers in the first third of April: 6 Apr in Johnson County and 9 Apr at Mermet Lake. Both these birds bested the prior record-early date of 11 Apr for the species. The Tennessee Warbler found by Frank Bennett 6 Apr in Massac County joins last year's 9 Apr 2011 bird (also Massac County) as the two earliest on record and the only ones from the first third of April. There are a couple of dates from the first few days of April for Orange-crowned Warbler, and these are the earliest migrants of the species we have on record. The Orange-crowned seen 31 Mar at Ft. Massac State Park by Keith McMullen nudges this record arrival date back. However, Leroy Harrison noted as an early arrival an Orange-crowned Warbler 25 Feb in southeast Illinois. If not a wintering bird, or one that wintered nearby, this would be an exceptionally early date for a northbound bird.