



Mottled Duck drawing by Michael L. P. Retter

Field Notes

2004 spring migration

by Paul R. Clyne

A rather simplistic view of spring migration plots the north-bound passage of birds on a calendar that conveniently begins with March and ends with May, and during which the denouement is a month-long frenzied flurry as the resolute, motley troops of warblers and other insectivores wend their way back north through our treetops. And then it's over. Of course, spring migrations are never so straightforward, but the spring 2004 passage came unusually close to being just that simple.

Sustained low temperatures in February resulted in deeper, more widespread freezing of waters and in more persistent snow cover than has been typical of most recent winters. Even days with milder south winds in the second half of February precipitated little movement, as there was little hospitable habitat to move into. Barely more than a trickle of migration was reported until the last two days of February (and the last day would already have been March but for 2004 being a leap year).

March proceeded at a steady, but sluggish, pace for migration, predictably bolstered by warm fronts now and again, most notably on 20 and 28 March, before turning colder at month's end. The first half of April remained chilly (it was, for example, the coldest first two weeks of April on record in Chicago), while the second half of the month brought in a spring roller coaster of warm southwest fronts and chilly northerly fronts, with a predictable alternation of better and worse days for bird migration.

Our sincere thanks are extended to the following observers, who supplied all the data for the 2600+ records included in this summary. These observers are credited by their initials following each record; disambiguating citation forms are indicated where needed. As in previous reports, the sequencing of observers below is based on alphabetization of last and first initials or citation forms rather than on alphabetization of last names: Alan Anderson, Kim Ainis, Cindy Alberico, Douglas Anderson, Jill Anderson, Arlene Brei, Frank Bennett, H. David Bohlen, Margaret Baker,

Michael J. Baum, Richard & Sigurd Bjorklund (R&SBj), Ron Bradley, Steven Bailey, Vicki Buchwald, Jeff Chapman, Karin Cassel, Melinda Born Chapman, Paul Clyne, Scott Carpenter, Al Dierkes, Don Darnell, Donald R. Dann, Myrna Deaton, Pat Durkin, Randi Doeker, Sheryl DeVore, Dow Edgerton, Matthew Fraker, Sue Friscia, Tyler Funk, Chet Gresham, Eric Ginsburg, Urs Geiser, Brian Herriott, Cary Hillemonds, Frank Holmes, L. Barrie Hunt, Larry L. Hood, Leroy Harrison, Mary Ann Hoefliger, R. Hickson (RHn), Robert D. Hughes, Roger Hayes, Rhetta Jack, Larry Jeisy, G.

Johnson, Dan Kassebaum, Jerry Kumery (JKu) John Koch (fide EW), Masatake Kashiyae, Tim Kuesel (fide WM), Craig Litteken, Karen Lund, Thomas V. Lerczak, Carolyn Marsh, D. James Mountjoy, Keith A. McMullen, Kristy Mahan (fide TAM), Loren D. Mahan (fide TAM), Richard Messenger, Steven Mlodinow, Thomas U. May, Travis A. Mahan, Vince Moxon, Walter Marcisz, Sharon Parmet, Michael Puljung, A. Raim (ARm)(fide SB), Adam Reyburn, Jennette Rader, Phil Reyburn, Rhonda Monroe Rothrock, William C. Rowe, Andrew Spencer, Bob Shelby, Darrell J.

May was cool and wet overall, but otherwise comparatively uneventful from a meteorological standpoint, with few noteworthy hindrances or aids to migration. The usual spring passage of songbirds thus proceeded about as one might expect for most of the month, with the biggest numbers of insectivores concentrated in the period 8-23 May. An unusual feature this spring, however, was an abrupt downslide in diversity beginning 27 May. Doug Stotz commented, "...migration pretty much screeched to a halt about 24-26 May....This was my worst June for migrants since 1997...."

Excluding nine species requiring review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC) and three exotics, a total of 296 species were reported this season, including four record early arrivals, six new Illinois high counts, and two record late departures. Highlights are boldfaced in the species accounts.

The foundation of this summary is the detailed information on migration limits and populations as submitted directly to the compiler (or indirectly via the Illinois Department of Natural Resources) by field observers across the state. Migration limits and maximum counts are provided, where available, from each of the three subsections of Illinois, North, Central and South, as mapped out in Bohlen's (1978) Annotated Check-list of the Birds of Illinois. Additional data are selectively included for species and areas of special interest.