

FIELD NOTES

*Drawing of Black Rail
by Denis Kania.*



THE 1994 SPRING SEASON

by Robert Chapel

March was warmer and drier than normal statewide, while May was cooler and drier. In April, temperatures were near normal statewide and the southern and central portions of the state experienced abundant rain and severe flooding. Northern Illinois, in contrast, was unusually dry.

The exact effect of the weather on spring migration is not clear, although extensive flooded fields in central Illinois created habitat for large concentrations of early shorebirds, especially Golden Plovers and Pectoral Sandpipers in some areas. East central Illinois had one of the largest concentrations of these two species in recent memory.

The southern and western parts of the state seemed to have some better concentrations of landbird migrants than did eastern and northern Illinois where migrants did not appear at their normal times or locations. For example, the Chicago area received an early surprise when vireos, warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers overflowed their normal southern Illinois arrival point landing instead along Lake Michi-

gan in early to middle April. Many of these species continued migrating well into June. Thus, while this spring may have lacked some typical migration peaks, the total number of migrants may have been closer to normal than perceived by observers.

Large concentrations of gulls in the Lake Calumet region and along the Lake Michigan shoreline enthralled dedicated gull watchers. Winter gulls continued late in May. King, Yellow, and Black Rails thrilled birders in several parts of the state while Black-necked Stilts continued their incursions into southern and western Illinois. A Black Rail spent Memorial Day on Montrose Beach in Chicago (See seasonal highlights).

Other noteworthy sightings include Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Western Grebe, Brant, Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Reeve, Barn Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Sprague's Pipit, and White-winged Cross-bill.

Special thanks is extended to all contributors to this report, who are listed here in full and by initials following each observation: Bruce Aird, Cindy Alberico, Steve Amundsen, Doug Anderson, Rev. Glen Anderson, Louise Augustine, Renee Baade (RBA), Steve Bailey, Keith Barker (KBA), Michael Baum, Laurence Binford, Tadas Birutis (TBI), David Bohlen, Arlene Brei, Jeff Brown (JBr), Karin Cassel, Robert Chapel, Elizabeth Chato, Paul Clyne, Mary Cote (MCo), Robert Danley, Myrna Deaton, Judy DeNeal, Sheryl DeVore, Mike Donahue (MDo), Jeff Donaldson (JDo), Bob Erickson, Ralph Eiseman, Todd Fink, Darlene Fiske, Ronald Flemal, Sue Frisia, Louis & Ruth Giesecke (RGI), Michael Graff, Brad Grover, David Habisohn (DHa), Marianne Hahn (MHa), Jeff Hardt (JHa), John Harshman (JHr), Robert Harnish (RHn), Roger Hayes (RHa), Scott Hickman, Kanae Hirabayashi, Michael Hogg, Robert Hughes, Ralph Herbst, Barrie Hunt, Kate Hunter (KHu), Thomas Jackman, Chris Johns, Dave Johnson, Lee Johnson, Peter Kasper, Dan Kassebaum (DKa), Vernon Kleen, Byron Kloth, John Koch (JKo), Walter Krawiec, Michael Kutska, Jim Landing, Dennis Lane, Larry LaPre, Lois Lohmann (LLo), David Mandell,

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