

etc.) and those that gather in flocks after breeding (i.e. ducks, blackbirds, etc.). I also encourage everyone to give as precise locations as they can when reporting their sightings, to include the names of townships (if known), in place of just the county name, especially for rural locations.

#### **The 2007 summer season weather**

The 2007 spring season looked to be a lead-in to the continued very warm temperatures of most summer seasons of late, which have led to the drought conditions over many parts of Illinois in recent years, with temperatures 4-5 degrees above average from March through May, the fifth warmest such period since 1895. Precipitation amounts were lower than normal for the spring period for much of the state. However, both temperature and precipitation in June in Illinois were only slightly above average. In July, temperatures were actually slightly below average statewide, with near average precipitation. The July precipitation was much more variable however, depending on different parts of the state, with the west-southwest portion of the state receiving just less than half the average amount of rain than normal for that month, while northwestern Illinois received almost 5 inches more precipitation than the previous area, or about 175% of the normal average. This variability left some areas of the state still remaining in drought conditions. Severe weather was only reported on eight dates in June and six dates in July in the state.

#### **The 2007 summer season highlights**

In the rare vagrant category, a Neotropical Cormorant was found in southern Illinois and remained for at least a month for many to see. However, that species pales in comparison to the two species found in northeastern Illinois. A potential first state record Brown-chested Martin and a second state record Fork-tailed Flycatcher caused great excitement for the single observers that viewed them. Both are pending review from the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC).

Two new species nested in Illinois for the first time in 2007—Bufflehead in McHenry County and Laughing Gull in Chicago (Cook County). There is some thought that the female Bufflehead may have been injured slightly, so as to prevent continued migration to its normal breeding grounds, but after already being inseminated by a male, with the female remaining in Illinois to nest and raise her young. After having one or more Laughing Gulls returning to the same Chicago-area locations for the last few summers, including a hybrid Laughing X Ring-billed Gull last year, it was just a matter of time before one was confirmed breeding there.

Many American White Pelicans nested less than a quarter mile from the Illinois border in Iowa on an island in the Mississippi River, and numbers of this species continue to increase during the summer at and along several major Illinois lakes and rivers, especially in the western half of the state.

A plethora of duck species was found this summer, including such summer rarities (and non-breeders) as Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser, while Common Loons at three locations included

one long-staying bird in alternate plumage. Other non-breeding birds to appear this summer included several subadult Mississippi Kites, which over-migrated into areas outside of their normal breeding range. In one case, three birds readily fed on the 17-year cicadas, which occurred mostly in northern Illinois during spring and summer 2007. Two American Golden-Plovers possibly summered in central and northern Illinois.

A late July Merlin sighting was one of several species to make summer appearances in the state, arriving exceptionally early (from the north?), apparently as very early fall migrants. The appearance of two Hermit Thrushes in late July was virtually unprecedented; they arrived several weeks earlier than any previous Illinois fall report. While Red-breasted Nuthatches did breed in two locations in northeastern Illinois this summer, several other nuthatches began appearing in early July and continued through early August, representing an abnormally early movement of this species southward from its normal breeding range. White-throated Sparrows were found singing at several locations in the middle of summer, as far south as Knox County. A singing White-crowned Sparrow was seen by many along the Chicago lakefront, this one present for at least a month, making it six out of the past seven years that at least one of this species has shown up along the Chicago lakefront in mid-summer. One wonders if the White-crowned Sparrow will soon attempt nesting like White-throated Sparrows have done in Chicago in recent years. Yet another boreal forest species, a junco, was seen in early June, apparently a late spring migrant.

Some of the highlights (and disappointments) involving breeding species include an unprecedented number of American Bitterns heard and seen in northeastern Illinois, including some in unexpected areas like the one in central Illinois in July! "Southern" herons were somewhat scarce, at least partially due to the continued demise of one of their most important breeding rookeries. Cattle Egrets were almost non-existent. New Bald Eagle nests continue to appear throughout the state, and after their first nesting occurrence just a few years ago, Osprey were found nesting in several areas of the state this summer.

Increased numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoos in northern Illinois, especially in the Greater Chicago area were thought to be the result of the 17-year periodical cicada emergence in northern Illinois. Good numbers of summering Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were noted by several observers in the northwest corner of Illinois along the Mississippi River, including a rarely found nest. Several Alder and Least Flycatchers were noted including one definite nesting of the latter species. Cliff Swallows continue to become increasingly common throughout the state as a breeding species, returning to many areas of the state where they have not bred in many years. Bewick's Wren was found at the traditional Siloam Springs State Park breeding area after going unrecorded there the previous three summers. Sedge Wrens were more numerous and statewide in distribution as a breeding species in early June, as opposed to their more usual abundance and arrival in early July. A nesting Marsh Wren in one southern Illinois location was locally very rare. Fifty-five Veeries was a record