



# Field Notes

## The 2006 Breeding Season

by Vernon M. Kleen, Compiler

*Drawing of Yellow-throated Warbler by Barbara Williams*

The 2006 breeding season was mostly hot and dry. Although June temperatures averaged near normal, July temperatures averaged 3-4 degrees above normal and included 100-degree days at least twice. June, for the most part, was dry; rainfall averaged 1 to 2 inches below normal and the measurable rains were limited to the dates of 1 & 28 June. July rainfall averaged 1 to 3 inches below normal; however, measurable amounts did occur on at least nine days during the month. As a result of the rain-free June, it was possible for the annual Breeding Bird Survey routes to be completed on time and with excellent results. I offer my sincere thanks to the state's serious birders who run these important routes each year.

Some of the more interesting 2006 breeding records included the first state nesting for Trumpeter Swans (see below and article in this issue); isolated breeding of several wetland species at Hennepin Lake; fair numbers of Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Mergansers and Pied-billed Grebes; a small colony of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons; more nesting Ospreys (but limited success); more Cooper's Hawks; five pairs of Swainson's Hawks; young King and Virginia Rails and Common Moorhens; two nests of Black-necked Stilts; an expanding population of Monk Parakeets; the June Burrowing Owl; an excellent number of young Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (based on the numbers captured at the hummingbird festivals); a Rufous Hummingbird; first nesting of crows at Des Plaines since the West Nile outbreak; good numbers of Ovenbirds and Cedar Waxwings; the first confirmed nesting of Summer Tanager in Cook County (see article in this issue); good numbers of Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows; the first confirmed nesting of Blue Grosbeak in Lake County; and good numbers of Dickcissels.

A few of the disappointing accounts were the gradual demise of the Alorton heron colony—the state's major nesting site for Little Blue Herons and the only site for nesting Snowy Egrets (hopefully the colony is relocating to another protected site); low numbers of nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons (all colonies); lower than expected numbers of Mississippi Kites; no data for Peregrine Falcons; no record of nesting Forster's or Black Terns; low numbers of Capri-mulgids; decreasing numbers of Red-headed Woodpeckers; no Scissor-tailed Flycatchers; low numbers of

shrikes; poor Painted Bunting results; and few reports of nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Some of the most noteworthy NBSO (non-breeding summer occurrence) records were for geese, dabbling and diving ducks, a Common Loon, large numbers of pelicans, Glossy and White Ibises, several species of gulls and a female Great-tailed Grackle. As for the pelicans, it was an "exceptional summer season for non breeding residents.... Unless summer flooding occurs [at Lake Chautauqua NWR], we'd not be surprised to see nesting attempted on the south pool spoil or the islets in part of the south pool" very soon (RGB). Also, the well-timed de-watering of the south pool and the appearance of mudflats at Lake Chautauqua NWR permitted large numbers of fall-arriving shorebirds to utilize the site (RGB).

The pair of Trumpeter Swans that nested at Savanna (Carroll Co) this year was captive-bred. The female (OC-6) was hatched in 2003, raised in captivity in Iowa and released 20 April 2005 at Green Island Wildlife Management Area in Iowa just across the river from Lost Mound NWR. The male (1 H 9) was hatched in 2004, raised at Lincoln Park Zoo, also released on 20 April 2005, but at Gomer's Marsh about 3 miles north of Clinton, IA and spent most of the winter on the Mississippi River between the Quad Cities and Muscatine, IA. The pair teamed up in the spring and by mid-May had selected a muskrat lodge as a nest site. The first young were detected 9 Jun and two were noted on 21 Jun.

The quality and quantity of reports submitted for this annual compilation increases annually. I offer many thanks to all of you for taking both the time and initiative to submit your notes. This is my last seasonal report. It's been both fun and challenging serving as the compiler of field notes for the past 35 years, initially for all four seasons and more recently for just the breeding season. I encourage everyone to continue submitting seasonal notes to the state compilers to maintain the best record of Illinois' current and changing avifauna.

Some records not printed here may still be under IORC (Illinois Ornithological Records Committee) review; when completed, they will appear in the published IORC report. As standard policy, all observers, regardless of experience, must fully document all unusual observations. Easy to use documentation forms are available from IORC Secretary, Doug