

# IOS REDS

## Set Another Lake County Big Day Record

by Sheryl De Vore

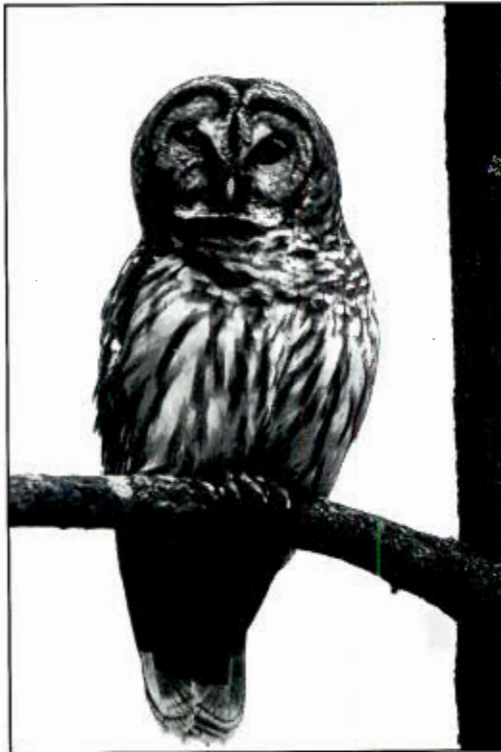
The IOS REDS (Renee Baade, Eric Walters, Dave Johnson, and me, Sheryl De Vore) astounded themselves when they broke the Lake County, Illinois Big Day record on 17 May 1996. The only hope the following year was to tie or add one more species to the record they created last year. Instead, the IOS REDS (minus Eric Walters who could not attend due to a leg injury) astounded themselves even more when they produced 163 species in one county within 22 hours on 20 May 1997. Mr. "Glib" David Johnson now insists we could get 170 next year!

Here's what it took for us to break the record. We had a plan and a schedule and vowed to stick to it (at the most we were only one hour behind). We did research such as calling people on the phone and asking what they saw where. We scouted the day before. We skipped meals and brought snacks and Gatorade. We kept our thoughts to ourselves unless they were going to get us another bird. We had a good working knowledge of the area including the back roads.

And we prayed for good luck and good weather.

We started at 3 a.m. at Wright Woods in Lake County where a Barred Owl had responded to a tape in mere seconds on Spring Bird Count Day about a week and a half earlier.

It was cool that morning, necessitating wearing layers, even a hat and gloves, but the wind was calm and the sun was destined to shine.



*The IOS Reds tried for a Barred Owl at 3 a.m. on the Lake County Big Day, but had to wait until 11 p.m. to finally add it to the list. Photo of this adult Barred Owl was taken on 21 April 1996 at the Mermet Lake Conservation Area by Eric Walters.*

One hour later, the Barred Owl succeeded in eluding us. So we settled for Dave's duet with an Eastern Screech-Owl and a Great Horned Owl interjecting its hoots from afar just to let us know who was king of the forest. As impending daybreak

threatened to rain our owl parade, we left for Waukegan Beach along Lake Michigan. Our hoped-for Franklin's Gull never showed, nor did any other rare gull species. But we did add Willet, Black-crowned Night-Heron, a very late Common Goldeneye (with a little help from Eric who was birding on the beach), 21 gorgeous Ruddy Turnstones, and a first-year Summer Tanager (summer teenager as Dave calls it).

If you're planning a Lake County Big Day, this is the place you have to be at sunrise. Here's where you can get all your swallow species, many shorebirds, gulls, and migrants. It's imperative here to have one pair of eyes looking up, while others are looking forward or to the lake. I glimpsed our only Green Heron of the day, a flyby while Dave and Renee were ticking off swallows.

The most exciting find, however, was the federally endangered Piping Plover, which posed for a few moments on the sand, just as we walked north toward it, then flitted behind the swales, escaping the scope of any other birder who happened by that day. We heard it had been there, so we were looking for it, and that helped.

Our next stop was the ravine bottoms at Bowen Park in Waukegan, where my prediction of finding our only Black-throated Blue Warbler of