



Field Notes

Horned Lark drawing by Michael L. P. Retter

The 2002 Breeding Season Report

by Vernon M. Kleen

The 2002 Breeding Season was quite similar to that of the 2001 season and can best be summed by paraphrasing Doug Stotz's comment in the introductory paragraph of the 2001 Report: an excellent season with a number of rare breeders and an interesting array of unusual finds.

First, some of the more interesting breeding records included: Little Blue Herons (3 pairs at Lake Calumet), nesting American Black Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teal and Ruddy Ducks (all with young), a covey of Gray Partridge, plenty of coots, Black-necked Stilt nests, Ring-billed Gulls returning as roof-top nesters (with 86 young banded), nesting Common, Forster's, and Least Terns, a great crop of hummingbirds (including 1200+ banded in Jackson and Union Counties), the return of Western Kingbird and Painted Bunting, Illinois' third Fish Crow nest, lots of Cedar Waxwings, a fledgling Mourning Warbler (see article in this issue), plenty of Henslow's Sparrows, a new Lake County site for nesting Brewer's Blackbirds, lots of young House Finches (Springfield), and a Pine Siskin nest (see article in this issue).

Second, the most unusual vagrant and June reports were: Eared Grebe, Glossy Ibis, White-faced Ibis, American Golden-Plover, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, White-winged Dove, Cassin's Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow; some of these reports remain under review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC). Third, some of the rarer or hard-to-find species reported as nesting this year included: Snowy Egret (increasing population), Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black Vulture, Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Common Moorhen, Virginia Rail, Monk Parakeet, Barn Owl, Brown Creeper and Pine Warbler. In contrast, species reported with low or declining populations were Black-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Veery and Ovenbird.

Next, how about those NBSO (Non-Breeding Summer Occurrence) birds? Occasional migrants linger (into June)

beyond their normal spring departure dates or appear (in July) in advance of their expected fall arrival dates; however, a few birds stay all summer long (or appear/disappear during part of the summer) and their presence cannot be specifically identified with either migratory season; these latter birds are the NBSOs. Some of the 2002 NBSO records have already been mentioned above; others were: a Common Loon, American White Pelicans, several waterfowl species, a few shorebirds, Franklin's Gull, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Dark-eyed Junco. Perhaps 2003 will be the year to confirm the pelican and Caspian Tern as breeding in Illinois. The term "NBSO" does not preclude the possibility that some of these birds may be breeding in Illinois; observers should revisit the sites where these birds are seen to search for nesting evidence and send documentation to the compiler.

The weather for the early part of the season (March through May) was rather mixed; however, during early June, there were spotty and heavy downpours in isolated localities (especially w.c. counties) and little (if any) rain at other locations. During the latter half of June and throughout July it was fairly dry and hot. At Meredosia (Morgan Co) on 13 Jun (after more than six inches of rain in one day) there was considerable flooding (including the roads); this attracted unexpected ducks, coots and shorebirds (fide Jim Funk).

In regards to the increased reports of prairie nesting wetland birds in Illinois during May and June, Bob Montgomery offers the following observation. "Perhaps the increased reporting of such species as Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck and some other species of waterfowl (perhaps Northern Pintail), Wilson's Phalaropes, American and Least Bitterns, and rails is due to water and habitat conditions in the Dakotas, western Minnesota, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The annual survey conducted for waterfowl and wetland habitat conditions in these states and provinces by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service and the various