



Field Notes

Field Notes Heading drawing of Wood Thrush on nest by Denis Kania.

The 1999 Breeding Season Report

by Vernon M. Kleen

Unlike 1998, rains did not hamper most breeding bird survey work in 1999 and, by the end of the season, Illinois had experienced *too little* moisture. However, several ponds that often dry in northeastern Illinois held water all summer, providing habitat for breeding wetland species. In contrast, the lower than normal water level in Lake Michigan helped expose a sandbar that was used by several summering species.

Some of the more significant, confirmed breeding records this season include the following: Little Blue Herons (2 pairs) nesting at Lake Calumet (first-known northeast Illinois record, see article in this issue for more information); young Green-winged Teal in Boone County; the second confirmed Osprey nest (at the same location as last year) in Cook County; a minimum of 22 successful Bald Eagle nests; a Sharp-shinned Hawk's nest in Champaign County; 3 Sora nests (with 36 eggs) in Lee County; a minimum of 33 Sandhill Crane nests in 8 northeastern counties; 2 broods of Black-necked Stilts in Alexander County (see separate article in this issue); nesting Least Flycatchers in McHenry County and other reports from Lee and Cook counties; and nesting Red-breasted Nuthatches at Sand Ridge State Forest. In addition, there were notable records for the following breeding species: all herons (see accompanying table and map); Wood Duck (large broods), Blue-winged Teal (several broods), Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, King Rail, other rails, moorhens and gallinules, American Coot (several broods), Upland Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull (5000+ nests at Lake Calumet), Herring Gull (4 colonies with 3-19 nests per colony), Common Tern (disrupted nesting), Least Tern (delayed nesting), Eurasian Collared-Doves (expanding distribution), cuckoos (both species scarce), Loggerhead Shrike (19 nests at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area), Fish Crow (up the Kaskaskia River to Carlyle Lake), Sedge Wren (lots of birds), Henslow's Sparrows (continued good showing), and Yellow-headed Blackbird (Mike Ward banded 102 new birds and had 43 returns from last year's banded birds).

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Other June and July highlights, which cannot be specifically labeled as late spring departures or early fall arrivals, have been labeled as Non-Breeding Summer Occurrence (NBSO) records. Significant observations that fit this label for 1999 include: lingering loons, the Neotropic Cormorant in northwest Cook County, the continued summer occurrence of American White Pelicans, plenty of lingering waterfowl, the Laughing Gull that returned for the third consecutive year to the southeast Cook County Kentucky Fried Chicken parking lot, the Little Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center (see *Meadowlark* Vol 9 No. 2, our next issue for photos and information on the Little Gull), more Caspian Terns, Illinois' second record of Band-tailed Pigeon (DeWitt County), see separate article in this issue, Northern Saw-whet Owl (McLean County), Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and lingering warblers. As usual, there were several late-departing records of shorebirds, flycatchers, and warblers and early-arriving fall records for the same species; relevant spring data are included in the addenda below, while Jun/Jul migrant arrivals will be included in the fall migration field notes.

A new addition to this report is the status and location of the 1999 heron colonies. The accompanying map shows the location of many of Illinois' colonies including those along the Mississippi River in adjacent Iowa and Missouri; it is quite possible that several colonies, mostly those with 50 or fewer nests, are still to be discovered and reported. Despite modest changes in location, the heron colonies along the Mississippi River appear to be rather stable; however, those along the Illinois River seem to be declining, none of which, if counts/estimates are correct, contain 500 or more nests as they did only a few years ago. Another concern is the declining number of nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons at all colonies except the Alorton colony (near E. St. Louis).

As if competing with last year, more observers provided more information for the 1999 Breeding Season Report than in