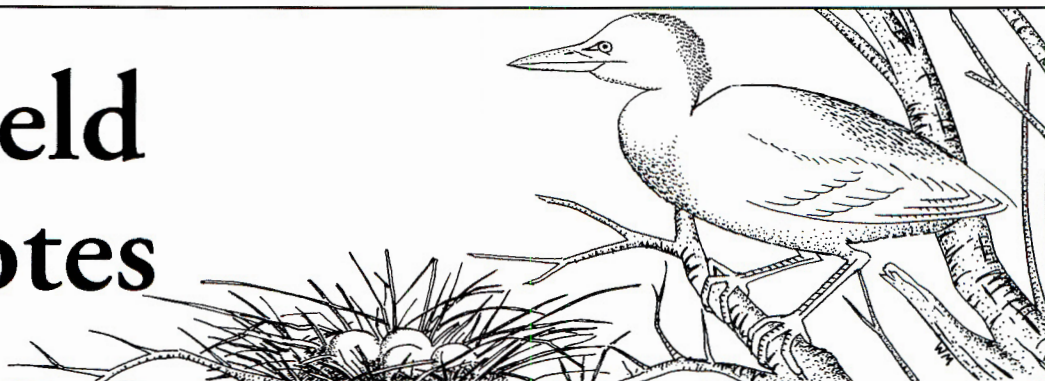


# Field Notes



*Cattle Egret drawing by Walter Marcisz.*

## 1993 Breeding Season

by Vernon M. Kleen

The 1993 Breeding Season will be best remembered as the year of "...the greatest flood in North America's modern history." (Illinois State Water Survey). Although the most serious flooding occurred in the Mississippi River bottomlands (primarily where levees broke) and the southern reaches of the Illinois River (backed up from the Mississippi overflow), most all major Illinois rivers experienced flooding during some part of the season. For nesting birds dependent upon the riparian habitats, most damage occurred after the primary nesting season; however, the effects of the prolonged flood action on these habitats and the local nesting populations can only be evaluated in years to come.

For the record, unprecedented rainfall has produced the wettest spring and early summer of the century for the Upper Mississippi River basin (upstream from Quincy). Since April, portions of the basin have received up to twice the normal rainfall; compared to the long-term average, rainfall during April and May was 40 percent higher than average, June rainfall was more than double the average, and July rainfall was 75 percent above average. An extremely heavy wind and rain storm passed through southern Illinois on the morning of 4 June and toppled the young out of at least three of our Bald Eagle nests; another major storm passed through northeastern Illinois on 7-8 June where the rainfall values ranged from "just" 7.60 inches in Des Plaines to 16.46 inches near 120th Street in S. Chicago. The July precipitation varied from more than 10 inches in the extreme east and east-southeast as well as the extreme west (contributing greatly to flooding problems along the Mississippi River) to less than 4 inches in the extreme northeast (Illinois State Water Survey).

Although a cold period developed during June, the average monthly temperature was only 1 degree below normal; during July, the average monthly temperature was 1 degree above normal, varying from just below

normal in the northwest to almost 5 degrees above normal in the far south.

The most intensive breeding season surveys and investigations included the continued monitoring projects in the Shawnee National Forest and forests of northwestern Illinois by Scott Robinson and company; the completion of 81 Breeding Bird Survey routes (an increase of 17 since the program began in 1966) to monitor short-term and long-term population trends; and the ninth annual Cook County Breeding Season Nesting Census. More intensive efforts are expected through the forthcoming Illinois Partners In Flight Program.

### Highlights

Breeding season highlights this year (which do not include the late spring and early fall migrants) include the following: the continuing expansion of the **Double-crested Cormorant** population; the presence of a large group of **American White Pelicans**; two new large **Cattle Egret** colonies along the Mississippi River (both flooded out); pairs of **Northern Pintail** and **Gadwall** and a brood of **Northern Shovelers** in Havana; more summer reports of **Ospreys** (perhaps an active nest will soon be located in Illinois after a lapse of 40+ years); seven **Northern Harrier** nests near Bogota; fair numbers of rail, moorhen, and coot broods; **Sandhill Cranes** nesting in Winnebago Co; distraction displays given by **Black-necked Stilts** near a possible nest; expanding colonies of **Ring-billed Gulls**; the July presence of an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** and two **Lesser Black-backed Gull** sightings in mid July in Evanston and in late July in Springfield; the June appearance of another **Royal Tern**; three **Barn Owl** nests and two **Short-eared Owl** nestings in southern Illinois; **breeding Long-eared Owls** bordering the Nachusa Grasslands; the continued June/July presence of **Alder Fly-**

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