

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS - Breeding Season 1997

Red-throated Loon Spends June Near Chicago

Late afternoon on 23 May 1997, I received a message from Jim Phillips that a strange loon had been at Tampier Lake in the Palos area (Cook County) all day. Phillips works for the Cook County Forest Preserve District and had been surveying the area. He was sure it was a Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*), but wanted others to check the bird since this was an unusually late day for any record near Chicago.

The morning of 24 May 1997, Kosh Monday, Kay Hanson, Tom Hamilton, and I set out for Tampier Slough and parked at the east end. Tom soon spotted a loon, but the bird immediately took to the air and landed at the west end of the lake nearly a half-mile away. We all trooped to the west end and spent nearly an hour searching, while enjoying the many flycatchers, sparrows, and hawks passing by. Suddenly Kosh spotted the bird in nearby vegetation. It was a loon and it was diving. It seemed to be a small loon with an upturned bill, which it held high at an angle even when it surfaced. We all had scopes, and it being a bright sunny day, good looks were enjoyed by everyone.

The bird had a small smudge on the lower chest, which may have been the only sign of any breeding plumage. We thought it was a least one year old and that it was late in reaching breeding plumage. The head and crown were dull gray, not black, and the face was similar, including and above the eye.

The back was dark with conspicuous feather edges.

At about the same time we spotted another loon nearby which turned out to be a Common Loon (*G. Immer*) in breeding plumage. So it turned out that both loons were at Tampier Lake on an unusually late date.

According to Jim Phillips and his co-workers, they had just stocked the lake with fish when the loons arrived.

Both Common and the Red-throated Loon were observed at Tampier Lake until at least 24 June.

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Henslow's Sparrows in Southern Illinois

On 13 June 1997, I surveyed two fields in Johnson and Pope Counties for breeding birds. One was an 800-acre field owned by the U.S. Forest Service on the Johnson-Pope County line and the second was a 300-acre idle field located about seven miles west in Johnson County. Both sites contained a mix of grassland and shrubland habitats. At each site I censused birds using 100-m fixed radius point counts.

One exciting find in these fields was the discovery of two fairly large populations of the state-endangered, Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*). At least 28 territorial (singing) male Henslow's Sparrows were detected on the 800-acre tract on the Johnson-Pope county line and at least 20 territorial males were detected on the 300-acre Johnson County tract. This discovery was noteworthy because it involved two relatively large populations and because the birds were discovered in the far southern part of the state. Populations of Henslow's Sparrows larger than 15 pairs are very rare in Illinois (Herkert 1994). Up through 1994, only one modern population of Henslow's Sparrows (Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area) was known to consistently contain more than 15 pairs (Herkert 1994). Since 1994, two other populations of more than 15 pairs have been discovered, one at the Jasper County Prairie-Chicken Sanctuaries



Immature Red-throated Loon. 22 June 1997. Tampier Sough, Cook Co. This is a first summer record for Illinois. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.