

# Field Notes



*Dickcissel drawing by Michael Retter.*

## The 1998 Breeding Season Report

by Vernon M. Kleen

The breeding season was extremely wet. At times, persons doing specific field surveys, especially in June, were unable to complete their work because of extensive rain. However, the season turned out to be excellent for nesting cormorants, herons, eagles, moorhens, cranes, Henslow's Sparrows, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and several other species.

Some major breeding records were: first confirmed Osprey fledglings in nearly five decades, (see story in this issue), second (and third) confirmed nesting of Purple Gallinules, (see story in this issue) and renewed nesting of Black-necked Stilts. Other notable nesting occurrences were: nests of American and Least bitterns, possible Little Blue Heron nesting at Lake Calumet, wild-reared young of the exotic Trumpeter Swan, nestlings for four less common duck species: Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser and Ruddy Duck, expanding range of Mississippi Kites (see article in this issue), increased numbers of Bald Eagle fledglings, Swainson's Hawks continuing to survive, more records of nesting rails, excellent numbers of American Coots, good numbers of Upland Sandpipers at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, first recorded nestings for Eurasian Collared-Doves, increased numbers of Barn Owls, returning Western Kingbirds, successful nests of Bewick's Wrens (see article in this issue), high numbers of Sedge Wrens, and a good number of "northern" nesting records for the Loggerhead Shrike. Of special note is the 12-year old Carolina Chickadee that has continued to nest near Charleston.

As usual, June and July observations included a variety of other highlights as well; although some records can be labeled late spring migrants and others early fall arrivals, some don't fall into either category and have been identified as: Non-breeding Summer Occurrences (abbreviated N.B.S.O. in the accompanying species accounts). It is my anticipation that three such species, American White Pelican, Caspian Tern and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher may soon be added as new breeding species in Illinois. Other interesting

records that fit the 1998 N.B.S.O. criteria were: Illinois' first **White-winged Dove** (see story in this issue), lingering loons and ducks, the occurrence of out-of-place herons and ibises, Springfield's Black Vulture, Rockford's Mississippi Kite, the June Parasitic Jaeger, several June/July gulls, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Of course, there were several late-departing records for shorebirds, flycatchers and warblers and early-arriving records for shorebirds, flycatchers and warblers (and these records were forwarded to the spring and fall seasonal editors.).

This year more observers submitted more information for the Breeding Season Report than any previous year. We thank each and every one of them and hope this trend continues. Speaking of trends, nearly all of Illinois' 81 Breeding Bird Survey routes were completed this year and most have been run by the same observers, year after year; this is significant in order to obtain comparable population results each year; therefore, special accolades to all of the surveyors (nearly all of whom are volunteer) who take this responsibility seriously every year.

Part of the huge success of this year's Breeding Season Report is the availability of key information provided by Illinois Natural History Survey and university staff who were conducting extensive field investigations throughout Illinois this past summer. As a result, new information has been included for the Savanna Army Depot, northeastern Illinois wetlands, Jasper County and extreme southern Illinois. I especially thank Mike Ward for his copious records and can appreciate the difficulty he must have had trapping and color banding 132 Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

As already mentioned, this compilation is the result of field efforts by dozens of dedicated professionals and non-professionals. Without their continued support we'd have minimal centralized information to pass on to future researchers. The persons responsible for records in the accompanying species accounts have been acknowledged individually after their records. As usual, major effort has been