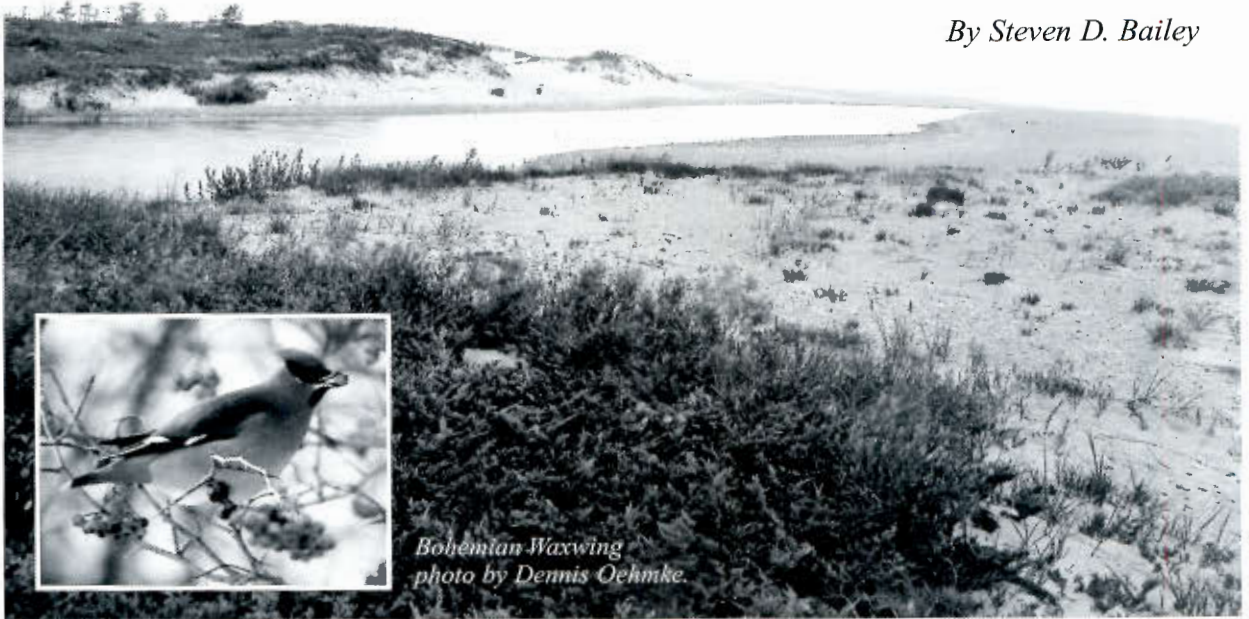


# Birdnotes from a bygone era

By Steven D. Bailey



*Bohemian Waxwing*  
photo by Dennis Oehlke

This article begins a regular series of contributions making historic comparisons between Illinois birds and birding in earlier days with contemporary bird status and knowledge. A great deal of similar fascinating and important knowledge can be gleaned from the writings of such past, preeminent Illinois ornithologists like Robert Ridgway, Margaret Morse Nice, and Frank Bellrose and lesser-known biologists like C.T. Black, H.K. Coale, and B.T. Gault, as well as today's birders and ornithologists.

Those interested in learning more, should consult the literature cited section at the end of these articles. This section can be a treasure-trove of even more interesting bird information to be found.

## Birds and birding at "Beach"

"Beach" is a favorite birding area of mine in extreme northeastern Illinois just south of the Wisconsin state line, composed today mainly of Illinois Beach State Park, but extending south

**"Once about seventy-five birds lit on the frozen surface of Dead River, making a picture I shall long remember, but it was for only a minute as the last ones had hardly alighted when the first were up and away."**

— Colin Campbell Sanborn (1922a),  
a zoologist with *The Field Museum in Chicago*, describing his 1919 experience of watching possibly Illinois' most memorable Bohemian Waxwing irruption into the state at "Beach," much of which is now known as Illinois Beach State Park.

*The photo above was taken 25 August 1925 by T.H. Frison and A.S. Beardsley shows the Dead River (formerly known as the Blind River) looking northeast toward Lake Michigan from the high-quality dune and swale areas at Illinois Beach State Park.*

*Photo courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey archives.*

to the northern edges of the town of Waukegan and north to Winthrop Harbor and the Wisconsin state line. Much of it also just happens to be a state nature preserve and National Natural Landmark and one of the rich-

est and biologically most diverse areas in the state (McFall and Karnes 1995). For a good history and description of the area see Ross (1963) and Greenberg (2002). Much of the following historic bird information comes from two articles published in the ornithological journal, *The Auk*, by John Farwell Ferry (1907), a bird collector for Chicago's Field Museum, and by Colin Campbell Sanborn (1922a), an early collector for The Field Museum and later the Museum's Curator of Mammals.

Many of the writings involving the locations of the birds are simply stated as being at "Beach." In Sanborn (1922a), Beach was said to lie "forty miles north of Chicago" and stretch "seven miles due north of Waukegan, a growing manufacturing town. It averages about one mile wide in width, with Lake Michigan on one side, and a high bluff, which is characteristic of the region north of Chicago, on the other. Along the lake stretch low sand ridges, and west of these is a large swamp, the open water