

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED BIRDS OF ILLINOIS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SPECIES AND THEIR HABITATS

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In Illinois there are presently 203 species of recorded breeding birds of which 42 (21%) are considered to be either endangered or threatened. The proportion of endangered and threatened birds is somewhat higher than the proportion of endangered and threatened taxa among most other vertebrate groups in the state (e.g., fish 17%, amphibians 13%, reptiles 22%, and mammals 15%).

The identification and protection of endangered and threatened species in Illinois had its primary roots in the early 1970s when two lists of rare, endangered, and extirpated species were developed. In 1971, George (1971) published a list of vanished and endangered birds of Illinois as an outgrowth of the 1970 annual meeting of the Illinois Audubon Society. George's list identified 27 species considered to be at risk of extirpation as breeding species and identified an additional 16 species that were considered to have been extirpated as breeding species (Table 1). In 1972, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission approved a preliminary list of 121 rare and endangered vertebrates (Illinois Nature Preserves Commission 1973), which included nine endangered, 32 rare, and six possibly extirpated species of birds (Table 1).

Also in 1972, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act providing legal protection for endangered species and creating the first official

list of Illinois endangered species. However, no birds were included on this initial list. Illinois' first official list of endangered species included only exotic species such as tigers, leopards, cheetahs, crocodiles, jaguars, polar bears, and ocelots.

The first official lists of endan-



The Red-shouldered Hawk has been listed as an endangered breeding species in Illinois since 1972. The species has bred within the past few years at Ryerson Conservation Area, Deerfield, Illinois, Lake County. The photo of this Red-shouldered Hawk was taken 31 Jan. 1992 in Springfield, Illinois by Dennis Oehmke.

gered and threatened native species were developed as part of the Illinois Endangered Species Project, which was initiated in 1977 by the Natural Land Institute. The Endangered Species Project was established to deter-

mine which native vertebrate and vascular plant species were threatened with extirpation. Following the compilation of preliminary information on potential species, a series of workshops were held in conjunction with the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Project in order to discuss the status of each species. The subsequent lists were then determined based on a consensus of experts, and forwarded to the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board for action. The Board held public hearings regarding the proposed lists and following review, adopted a list of 72 endangered and threatened vertebrates and 364 endangered and threatened plants (Bowles 1981). The first official list of Illinois native endangered and threatened species included 40 species of birds (Table 1).

The list of endangered and threatened bird species remained essentially unchanged for nearly 10 years until 1988-1989 when the list underwent its first major revision. Amendments added to the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act in 1985 included a provision that called for the review and revision of the state list of endangered and threatened species no less than once every five years. The 1988-1989 revisions resulted in the addition of five bird species to, and the removal of two bird species from, the state list resulting in a new total of 43 endangered and threatened bird species (Table 1).