

Inca Dove: first state record

By Homer and Amber Hanson

We live on the edge of Carbondale, Illinois, a small college town of 25,000 plus an additional 25,000 students when school's in session. We have tried to make our 3/4 acre lawn bird friendly with many evergreen trees, holly and other berried plants, a small water pond, bird baths, feeders and other bird amenities. We put a special emphasis on red annuals hoping to attract many Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Cathie Hutcheson has banded hummers at our house since 2000 and was here banding in late September 2004 when she noticed a different appearing dove walking with our other doves several yards from where we were sitting.

She soon identified it as an Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*). This small, long-tailed dove with scaly gray body and contrasting rufous in wings, is a regular resident in southwestern United States and Mexico.

The Inca Dove became a regular in the yard. We chose to call this bird a male and nicknamed "him" Incy. He would fly in with the other doves, come up close to the house (approximately 10 feet) hop up on a small feeder on legs and eat chicken scratch-style, then walk over to the nearby bird bath (heated during the winter) and get a drink before flying away. We looked forward to his visits two or three times each day. One spouse yelling, "Here comes Incy," would send the other spouse quickly to the window to share the moment.

Word spread regarding Incy, and more than 20 people signed his guest book, (after we novices found out we should have a book). We were utterly amazed that people would drive 300 miles to see Incy, even given the fact he was the first documented Inca Dove in Illinois. On one day, Mike Kutska and wife of River Forest



Inca Dove, Carbondale, Illinois. 12 November 2005. Photo by Homer and Amber Hanson.

along with friend Craig Taylor were here and saw Incy by 8:40 a.m. Joe Lill and other members of the Chicago Audubon Society came and saw Incy, and David Johnson of Buffalo Grove came with his dog through 24 inches of snow on 23 December 2004, but unfortunately he didn't get to see Incy. I think I was more disappointed than he that Incy didn't show up that day.

Incy came for the last time on Christmas Eve morning, 24 December 2004. When he didn't reappear, we felt a big void in our lives. We continued to glance out the window and gaze hopefully but as we looked at the snow piled in our yard, we realized that it was best he had flown off into the sunset to his usual, warmer habitat. He had brought us so much happiness and we had met so many interesting people because of his coming to our yard. These bird experts sat in our living room looking

out our picture window (which was about 10 ft from Incy's feeding box) for as many as six hours drinking coffee with us and sharing their birding experiences. Myrna Deaton of Decatur had just returned from a wonderful birding trip and shared her wonderful travels.

We have video and photos of the Inca Dove. A Louisiana bander said the Inca Doves had, in the last several years, expanded their range to include a lot of Louisiana (pers. comm. C. Hutcheson).

Our lives were certainly enriched by Incy and his admirers. We feel very privileged to have had Incy with us for three months.

—Homer and Amber Hanson
1124 Glenbeth
Carbondale, IL