

It always kept its distance from the gulls, but if they came too close, the skimmer would walk slowly toward them with its bill thrust forward and the gulls would back away.

The skimmer was observed much of the day. A few people actually got to see it "skim". Although the skimmer's bill is beautifully adapted for feeding in shallow coastal waters, the deep, murky water of Lake Decatur was a challenge. It was observed fishing in the marina, and it finally caught and ate a fish, but it wasn't graceful.

The other birds in the marina seemed to have known how out of place the skimmer was. The Ring-billed Gulls and even a Great Blue Heron were seen harassing it. Despite being harassed at times, the skimmer stayed with a group of gulls throughout the day.

At dusk all the gulls and the skimmer picked up in unison from the jetty and flew out into the middle of the lake to roost. There were lots of disappointed birders who arrived early

on Saturday morning to watch in vain for its return.

This sighting is the only record of the Black Skimmer in Illinois; there are no other references to the Black Skimmer in the ornithological literature for Illinois. The AOU Checklist of North American Birds, Seventh Edition, indicates that the Black Skimmer is casual inland in coastal states. Records further inland are usually storm-related.

The only other Midwestern records are from Tennessee (Robinson 1990), which has one record of a bird found dead in 1890 after a severe storm, and Indiana which has an observational record at Miller, 23 August 1913 and a photographic record of a bird from Winona Lake during early August 1985 (Keller 1986).

Literature Cited

Keller, Charles E., Shirley A. Keller and Timothy C. Keller. 1986. A Checklist and Finding Guide, Indiana Birds. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.

Robinson, John C. 1990. An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Tennessee. The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN.

American Ornithologists Union. 1998. Checklist of North American Birds. 7th ed. Allen Press, Lawrence, KS.

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Black Skimmer photos at Lake Decatur in Macon County on 4 September 1998 by Dennis Oehmke.

