

their management efforts on certain species or suites of species that have similar habitat needs. Managers will be better able to manipulate available habitat to maximize chances for contributing to the welfare of species for which Illinois is best suited rather than the traditional management approach of just creating habitat and seeing which species show up. One should temper this without losing sight of some of our uncommon species where Illinois may have a low percentage of the continental population such as Buff-breasted Sandpiper or Black-bellied Plover, but may still contribute importantly to regional populations and biodiversity.

Historically at least, Black-bellied Plover numbers in northeastern Illinois and adjacent Wisconsin have exceeded counts elsewhere in the Great Lakes. Certainly, viability of this small inland migrant population is important for the overall species richness of the Great Lakes region, although it may not be a significant proportion of the world population. Much of their favored plowed field habitat in northeastern Illinois was ironically "destroyed" by wetland restorations along the Des Plaines River, which attracted more aquatic-loving shorebirds to the site. Yet, brilliant-plumaged adults still occur in late May along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper numbers have seldom exceeded 40 birds at any one site in Illinois during fall, but with a world population estimated at only 15,000, any concentration for this species becomes an important location upon which to focus conservation and management efforts. With the species' strong site fidelity during migration, careful manipulation of known concentration sites could allow for a gradual population buildup over a period of years as occurred at Lake Calumet in the 1970s.

*Perhaps 50 percent of the world's population of American Golden-Plovers migrate through Illinois annually, making it a species of high conservation interest in the state.*



*This photo of an American Golden-Plover was taken at the HESOD farms in McHenry County, 17 August 2003.*

Illinois has few migrant Marbled Godwits. Spring numbers seldom exceed 5 birds and the species is even rarer in fall. At first glance this is not a species for which Illinois would seem to have much importance. Many wintering godwits along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts presumably cross over Illinois during migration, likely on non-stop flights from breeding grounds in the Dakotas and Canada's Prairie Provinces. There is the possibility though that some of our Marbled Godwits belong to the rare James Bay, Ontario breeding population (estimated at 1,500). If true, Illinois could be an important stopover for a small, but regionally significant number of these large waders.

A suite of species that Illinois harbors significant populations include the Greater Yellowlegs,

Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper. These are species for which flooded cropfields, riverine marshes of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, and drawn-down reservoirs and inland lakeshores provide optimal habitat. The estimates for the Greater Yellowlegs at 100,000 and Lesser Yellowlegs at 500,000 appear low, but even these numbers indicate that as 10% or more of the world's population of Greater Yellowlegs and 20% or more of the world's Lesser Yellowlegs may utilize Illinois habitats at some time during the year. Researchers have already indicated that the Solitary Sandpiper estimate of 20,000 is too low and that will be revised upward. It is almost impossible to run any meaningful census in its nearly inaccessible wet boreal forest breeding grounds. No matter what the population of this species, Illinois is almost certainly an important stopover locale. I can find no higher count in North America than the 250 recorded near Lake Calumet on 26 July 1981 and a few night watches on a late April night will indicate to the skeptics how common this species is, at least as a flyover in northeastern Illinois.

Pectoral Sandpipers, like many shorebirds, are opportunistic migrants and were often noted as abundant by early Midwestern naturalists. With a world population estimated at 400,000 and large numbers periodically noted in the state, Illinois appears to be a major flyway for this species with numbers larger in fall than spring (Bohlen, 1989) when the species takes a more westerly bearing moving up the eastern and central Great Plains. Illinois may see as many as 15,000 to 30,000 of these birds moving through the state spring and fall, likely a small percentage of what once occurred here, but still at least 5% of the world's population. Recently a Pectoral