



Reddish Egret

First Confirmed State Record

by Sue Friscia

Lake Calumet is surrounded by waste dumps, incinerators, sanitation plants, and factories. Trucks are constantly creating minor dust storms. Anyone considering obeying the speed limit will almost surely be run over by the 16-wheelers. Some days, especially when it's hot and humid, the air is so thick and fragrant that I must breathe through my hand to mask the aroma. Why anyone would want to spend as much time as I do in such an undesirable place is simple. You never know what birds will appear.

The summer of 1993 we had so much rain that the usual shorebird habitats there were flooded. I decided on 1 August to forget these traditional hotspots and check some

less accessible areas. One of these is the north end of Lake Calumet, which is being converted into a golf course. I couldn't find any shorebirds, so I

Sometimes you just have to take a chance. So I blurted out, "Bet this is a Reddish Egret."

climbed to the top of the newly created "Mount Calumet" where I saw that the middle basin was filled with egrets. I couldn't understand how they could be standing in water that should be way over their heads. Time to investigate.

As I drove down the 1-94 front-

age road looking for a good vantage point, I saw a woman unlocking a gate to a road that led to the basin. I drove in acting as if I belonged, but I don't recommend anyone else trying that unless they are willing to take a chance of being locked in, which has happened to me in the past. I stopped at a dike built through the middle of the basin. The western section was dry, and truckers were hauling clay to use as topping for the golf course. As a result, a great deal of water had been drained out of the eastern section making it very shallow. This new area was loaded with egrets, herons, and shorebirds. I observed a veritable feeding frenzy. The birds didn't even flinch when a cannon sounded every few minutes to scare away wildlife from the work area. I was asked to leave but told I could view the area from Stony Island Av-

*Immature Reddish Egret, 14 August, 1993. Lake Calumet, Cook County.
Photos by Joe B. Milosevich.*