

WOW! What A Day!

One of Illinois' best birders
adds three new state species to his list in a single day!

By Vernon M. Kleen

Thursday, 7 November 1996, was to be a day of field observations along the Mississippi River below the Quad Cities, however, a phone call early Wednesday was challenging enough to modify the schedule.

The call came from Michelle Simone, the Department of Natural Resource's District 5 Heritage Biologist in the Pekin office. Simone had just heard from Mrs. Viola Gronewold of Trivoli (in western Peoria County) who wanted to know if she should continue feeding the hummingbird that was still coming to her feeder. Gronewold knew that hummingbirds should have migrated south by November and was concerned that her feeding had kept this bird from doing what it was supposed to do. Temperatures had already dipped into the low 20s a few days earlier, so, why was this hummingbird still here?

Knowing that hummingbirds in late fall may be species other than the traditional Ruby-throated, I called Gronewold and recommended she continue feeding the bird as long as it stayed—no matter how cold it got. Of course, I also asked if several of us could stop by very early the next morning to determine if she had an unusual hummingbird. Gronewold graciously agreed, giving excellent directions to her home as well as offering advice on how we could best see the feeder near the window on the back patio.

H. David Bohlen and Myrna Deaton, co-members of the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee,

agreed to meet me at Williamsville at 6 a.m. Dan Kassebaum from Belleville also joined us.

It was 35 degrees and drizzling. The weather forecast for the rest of the day was gloomy - certainly not an ideal birding day. But we were on a mission.

Perhaps it was luck (Luck Number 1), that as we reached Peoria shortly after 7 a.m., the drizzle stopped never to return that day. We arrived at the Gronewold house about 7:30 a.m. and set up scopes on the southwest side. In just 15 minutes the hummingbird appeared. It was drab and different from what any of us had anticipated. Several features eliminated Ruby-throated as well as other projected possibilities such as Rufous Hummingbird.

Even though the bird sat still at close range for considerable time, it was difficult to pin down exact plumage and other details, so, we got Gronewold's permission to set up a mist net to capture the bird, and, called Louise Augustine (who was expecting our call) to join us with more detailed hummingbird information.

The net, where originally placed, was quite visible and the hummingbird went around and over it several times. We moved the net so that it stretched directly across the patio in front of the feeder. The hummingbird hovered in front of the net, moved to one side and finally flew into it (Luck Number 2). We quickly and carefully retrieved the hummingbird

from the net, took several measurements, photographed the bird, and collected one outer tail feather. On close-up evaluation we presumed the bird to be a female Broad-billed Hummingbird (a first Illinois record), then, solidified our decision with the support literature Augustine provided.

On pronouncement to Mrs. Gronewold that she was feeding a bird that had not been previously reported in Illinois and that a hundred or more birders from all over the state would like to see it, we asked her if she would have any problems continuing to feed the bird and "entertaining" a large number of visitors. Once again, she was a gracious hostess and agreed as long as the visitors did not block her driveway. As we departed about 10 a.m., Augustine, with Tom Pucelik, released the bird.

WOW! What a Day!
However, it was only beginning...

From Trivoli we headed to Lock & Dam 18 on the Mississippi River near Gladstone. We had heard that a Brown Pelican was there earlier in the week. We arrived about 11:30 a.m. and searched for the bird for an hour. We did see a Common Loon, an American White Pelican, and a Black Scoter below the dam, and 60 American White Pelicans, a Western Grebe, and lots of diving ducks above the dam. But no Brown Pelican.

We then realized that, on review of the state boundary lines, that **everything present** both above and below the Dam was **exclusively** in Iowa,