



## The 2010/2011 Illinois Christmas Bird Count

*Henslow's Sparrow. Fox Ridge State Park, Coles County.  
21 December 2010. Photo by Ron Bradley.*

*By Paul W. Sweet*

After the 2009/2010 unusually cold season, some warmer weather for the 2010/2011 Christmas Bird Count would have been appreciated. Alas, it was not to be. Only 24 counts reached the freezing mark, six reached 40 degrees, and only three (Cypress Creek, Mermet Lake, and Muscatine, IA) reached 50 degrees for the day. Fourteen counts were snow free, although three more reported a maximum depth of less than 1 inch. On the other hand, 15 counts reported at least 6 inches of snow, with White Pines topping the list at 16 inches. (See Table 1 for weather and effort results.)

Overall, 64 counts reported this year, with 1,052 field observers putting in 3,259 party-hours, both down somewhat from last year. Middle Mississippi NWR held their first count this year. Once again, Fermilab had the most observers, with 106 in 31 parties, and Waukegan had 66 feeder observers. The reduced effort and weather conditions were reflected in the results – only 160 species were counted on count days, with 5 more count week birds. Union County was the only count to exceed 100 species with 101. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were no species added to the state list this year, although a Henslow's Sparrow photographed at Coles-Cumberland was only the third CBC record reported for Illinois, the count week California Gull at Waukegan was the fourth, and the count week Slaty-backed Gull at Calumet was only the second for the state.

### Ducks through Herons

Goose numbers were down overall, with Greater White-fronted Geese 37 percent below the 10-year average and Cackling Geese at 42 percent of the 5 year average. Snow Goose numbers, on the other hand, were 60 percent above the 10 year average, led by 208,831 at

Cypress Creek. Trumpeter Swans were reported on 21 counts, with a new state high of 52 individuals in Union County. Tundra Swans were down to 4 counts, with 77 at Crane Lake. Lake Michigan produced a sea duck sweep, with Calumet City reporting all three scoters and Evanston reporting 6 Long-tailed Ducks. One White-winged Scoter was seen away from Lake Michigan at Rend Lake while Eastern Knox and Bird Haven both reported Long-tailed Ducks. Harlequin Ducks were reported at Calumet City and Chicago Lakefront.

Ring-necked Pheasant numbers were up from last year, with 589 being seen on only 30 counts. Newton reported 67 Greater Prairie Chickens, down nearly 10 percent from last year's 74 (and 2008's 77). Wild Turkey numbers were typical, but Northern Bobwhites were at a 10-year low, with only 169 seen on 14 counts.

Solitary Common Loons were reported on 3 counts, Pied Billed Grebes were reported on 20 counts and Horned Grebes on only 4 counts. American White Pelicans were reported on 3 counts, similar to last year, while Double-crested Cormorants were only reported from 12 counts. Five counts reported Black-crowned Night-Herons, including 13 at Calumet City. Only the count week bird at Springfield was away from the Chicago area. Baldwin Lake had the only Great Egret.

### Raptors through Gulls

Vulture numbers were fairly typical this year. An Osprey was reported from Middle Fork River Valley. Fifty-eight counts reported Bald Eagle. Western Mercer and Davenport, IA reported the only Northern Goshawks, while Kishwaukee had the only Golden Eagle. Merlin and Peregrine Falcon were each reported on 9 counts, with 4 Merlin at Clinton Lake.