

Black Skimmer at Lake Springfield: second state record

by H. David Bohlen

On 23 July 2004 I spotted a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) flying around fairly low at the beach area of Lake Springfield. It sat briefly on the beach with Ring-billed Gulls, but the whole flock was then chased off by crows. The skimmer flew north, so I went to the north end of Lake Springfield, a limited access area. I waited and shortly the skimmer came flying in, which startled the 200 or more gulls that were there. The gulls flew in circles, some chasing the skimmer. After much chasing and some soft yelping, almost puppy-like calls from the skimmer, it landed and I photographed it. A short time later the skimmer flew back toward the lake. I tried to relocate the bird, but could not. I went back to the north end and it was sitting with the gulls. Because of its short legs the skimmer was hidden part of the time by the gulls. The skimmer mostly slept, but it was also seen walking and flying and twice did short feeding flights leaving a line in the water.

That evening Beckie Dyer and I saw the skimmer again at the north end of Lake Springfield. Later we took Travis Mahan and Dan Kassebaum into the area to see the bird. The next morning the skimmer was gone although several people were present to look for it. The security guards at the lake informed me that no one else was permitted inside the cinder area at the north end. Also there was a confrontation at the dam with other security forces, so that even had the skimmer been present it was dubious that anyone could have viewed it.



Black Skimmer at Lake Springfield, Sangamon County, 23 July 2004. Photo by H. David Bohlen.



Black Skimmer at Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area (REDA), St. Charles County, Missouri, just across the river from Alton, Illinois. 25 September 2004. Photo by Joshua P. Uffman.

This is the second state record for Black Skimmer. The first was discovered 4 September 1998 in Decatur by Myrna Deaton (1999). The Springfield bird was in alternate plumage while the Decatur bird was in basic plumage as was shown by the white collar. Both were one-day phenomena. Several months later, on 25 September 2004, a Black Skimmer was seen by Frank Holmes in Madison County, on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River, the state's third record. The Madison County bird was photographed 25 September 2004 just across the Mississippi River in Missouri at Riverlands, where it apparently spent the most of its time (see IORC report in this issue). This was Missouri's first state record and was found by Dave Becher and photographed by Joshua P. Uffman.

Black Skimmers are casual inland away from the coastal states and the records are usually storm-related. The only other Midwestern records are from Tennessee (Robinson 1990) of a dead bird found in 1890 after a severe storm, one from Indiana at Miller, 23 August 1912, and a photographic record at Winona Lake, Indiana, in August 1985 (Keller 1986).

Literature Cited

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