

Bohemian Waxwing visits central Illinois in fall

by Eric Walters



About 9 a.m., 20 November 2004, I parked at Clinton Lake's Overlook Point Drive (at the base of the Peninsula Day Use Area) where I joined Dave Thomas perusing through a large flock of Cedar Waxwings about 150 yards in the distance. I soon noticed a larger, grayer waxwing with maroon undertail coverts in my scope. Here was a Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulous*) stunningly found so far south in the fall.

The waxwing flock was very active and the Bohemian was difficult to relocate, so we walked south down the road and then headed west along the woodland/harvested corn-field edge to get closer. In the lower bushes as well as in the upper branches of the oaks, we were able to obtain additional short views of this beautiful bird in the next hour.

Amazingly enough, about 11:15 a.m., as we were walking back from the Day Use Area, the 100+ waxwing flock flew towards us and landed in a couple leafless trees near to us, giving the morning's best views. At that point, the large flock split into two heading different northerly directions. This Bohemian was not relocated every day, probably at other feeding sites around Clinton Lake, but various birders were able to observe it through 28 November.

Bohemian Waxwings are typically associated with winter in Illinois. In fact, there are only four

other records in the last 21 fall seasons for the state, based on records from *Meadowlark and Illinois Birds & Birding*, with all birds located along the Lake Michigan lakefront. While there are at least nine central Illinois winter records for this species (see Meadowlark 9:92-93),

this Clinton Lake Bohemian represents the first Illinois fall record outside of northern Illinois.

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Bohemian Waxwing with a flock of Cedar Waxwings at Clinton Lake, DeWitt County. Note larger size and darker undertail coverts. Photos by Eric Walters.