

IOS field trip produces another lifer for another member

Story and photos by Greg Neise



The day dawned bright and calm. Lake Carlyle was like glass, and already fishermen and pleasure boaters were out in force. A Willet and Laughing Gull had made an early appearance, and many hundreds of American White Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorants were flying to and fro. While it was a beautiful day, it was not what I would have thought conducive to finding my #1 nemesis bird in Illinois (at the time): Sabine's Gull.

This species had vexed me for 35 years, and in my mind I thought the only way to see one in the state was to bare my teeth into a howling October northeast gale at Gilson Park in Wilmette. Certainly not on a fair-weather pontoon-boat pleasure cruise across Illinois' largest lake (not counting Lake Michigan). Thankfully, I was to be very wrong about that.

Our captain, Keith McMullen, told us to look for a "loaf of bread floating on the water." Sabine's Gull, he said, is considerably smaller than a Ring-billed and can be easily overlooked if it's not flying. Well, sure enough, about an hour into our expedition, we came across a loaf of bread floating on the water that turned out to be my lifer Sabine's Gull (and state bird # 338).

Just to make sure that we got our money's worth, Keith conjured up a Red Phalarope, too. This is definitely a trip that I will do again, and is one of IOS' most popular for good reason.

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Clockwise from top left:

Sabine's Gull resting on the water and looking like a "loaf of bread."

Sabine's Gull in flight.

American White Pelicans were plentiful at the Carlyle Lake field trip.

Red Phalarope, a rare find in Illinois any time.

All photos taken during the IOS Carlyle Lake field trip in September 2008.