

# Backyard lister attracts 221 species on farmstead

by Judy K. DeNeal

A glance at IOS' first backyard high count list shows one name appearing 143 times. James O. Smith has been watching birds on his Vermilion County farm for 45 years and has recorded 221 species on the farm and 181 for his yard. Farm duties have kept him outdoors and close to home and have certainly helped his bird list grow.

The farmstead, near Homer, Illinois, consists of grain fields, pasture, hay fields, some woodland, a couple of ponds, and several barns and outbuildings, which offer food and shelter to myriad birds. Smith has done more to lure birds close to the house. Each spring about five acres are set aside for wildlife food plots, which are planted with a mixture of milo, sunflower, buckwheat, and other foods relished by seed eaters. The yard is landscaped with many

kinds of trees and shrubs that provide food, winter shelter, and nesting sites. And there is plenty of water for drinking and bathing, too.

Smith keeps several feeders filled year-round. He estimates that in one year he purchases one ton of black oil sunflower seed, the only "bird seed" he offers at feeders. Corn-eating birds clean up grain spilled by the livestock and glean the fields, too.

An indoor spotting scope aimed at the pond nearest the house during waterfowl migrations has permitted good looks at just about every species of duck. The other pond from which the livestock tanks are filled is especially attractive to Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers.

Each year as spring planting commences, large flocks of Lesser Golden Plovers, Killdeer, and Pectoral Sandpipers dot the damp fields. In 1988, while surveying flocks of foraging shorebirds, Smith was surprised to see a yellow and green, thick-bodied bird with an orange bill and long tail walking over the newly tilled soil. When the plovers took flight, the exotic bird rose with them turning and diving in the simultaneous flight of shorebirds. Although the parrot was photographed, it has never been identified.

Spring planting also brings flocks of blackbirds (including Brewer's), American Crows, Horned Larks, Ameri-

## BACK YARD BIRD COUNTS, *continued from page 57*

### Species ..... Total ..... Observer

Greater White-fronted Goose .....	1 .....	JD
Snow Goose .....	1000 .....	TF
Canada Goose .....	4000+ .....	JS
Wood Duck .....	40 .....	JS
Green-winged Teal .....	10 .....	JS
American Black Duck .....	1 .....	KH/JD
Mallard .....	50+ .....	JS
Northern Pintail .....	2 .....	JS
Blue-winged Teal .....	20 .....	JS
Northern Shoveler .....	5 .....	JS
Gadwall .....	1 .....	JD
American Widgeon .....	5 .....	JS
Ring-necked Duck .....	30 .....	JS
Greater Scaup .....	30 .....	JS
Lesser Scaup .....	10 .....	JS
Common Goldeneye .....	2 .....	JS
Bufflehead .....	2 .....	JS
Hooded Merganser .....	3 .....	JS
Common Merganser .....	1 .....	JS/JD
Ruddy Duck .....	2 .....	JS
Black Vulture .....	3 .....	TF
Turkey Vulture .....	6 .....	JS
Osprey .....	2 .....	JS
Bald Eagle .....	1 .....	JS/JD/SD

### Species ..... Total ..... Observer

Northern Harrier .....	5 .....	JD
Sharp-shinned Hawk .....	1 .....	JS/CBT
Cooper's Hawk .....	1 .....	JS/CBT
Northern Goshawk .....	2 .....	MS
Red-shouldered Hawk .....	3 .....	TF
Broad-winged Hawk .....	18 .....	TF
Red-tailed Hawk .....	6 .....	JS
Rough-legged Hawk .....	2 .....	JS
Golden Eagle .....	1 .....	MS/JD
American Kestrel .....	8 .....	JS
Merlin .....	1 .....	TF
Peregrine Falcon .....	2 .....	JD
Ring-necked Pheasant .....	2 .....	JS
Northern Bobwhite .....	52 .....	TF
Virginia Rail .....	1 .....	MS
Sora .....	1 .....	MS
Sandhill Crane .....	270 .....	SF
American Golden Plover .....	500+ .....	JS
Killdeer .....	50+ .....	JS
Lesser Yellowlegs .....	4 .....	JS
Solitary Sandpiper .....	8 .....	JS
Spotted Sandpiper .....	2 .....	JS
Pectoral Sandpiper .....	200+ .....	JS
Common Snipe .....	5 .....	MS