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## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS • FALL 1993

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### Northern Gannet in Lake County

I spotted a peculiar bird 9 November 1993 while attending a business luncheon at Legends Restaurant. This eating establishment overlooks Little Bear Lake in Vernon Hills off Route 60 approximately 1 mile west of Route 21. As I glanced outside to watch Ring-billed and Herring Gulls and Canada Geese, a strange bird flew around the lake and then repeatedly dove into the water, submerging completely with each dive. It reminded me of an Osprey. But this was no Osprey. The dark-colored bird was larger than the Herring Gulls and had long narrow wings and an enormous bill.

I knew I would not be able to identify this bird without a field guide. Back at the office I became overwhelmed with work; thus it was several hours before I could look in my guide. When I did, I found no match with any Midwestern birds. It was time to call David Johnson to learn if he had seen or heard of any strange birds in the area.

I described the bird's behavior of diving into the water with the wings folded back and also mentioned the distinct whitish crescent-shaped "U" on the upper tail coverts or posterior side of the dark rump and tail. It resembled a shearwater.

Johnson then told me that I had probably seen an immature Northern Gannet (*Sula bassanus*) and that one had been sighted in Chicago, near the lakefront the past weekend on 6 November 1993. I paged through my bird book and he was right. The strange bird in Vernon Hills, indeed, was a Northern Gannet.

— Scott Farrell, 40366 N. Sunset Drive,  
Antioch, IL 60002

*Editor's note: This Northern Gannet was discovered in the least likely place for a pelagic species. Little Bear Lake, approximately 8 miles from Lake Michigan is a man-made lake in Vernon Hills' Park District Century Park. It connects to the larger Big Bear Lake. The lakes are completely surrounded by a large shopping center, strip malls, and industrial and residential buildings. The adage that rare birds can show up any time and any place certainly can and does happen.*

*Bohlen (1989, The Birds of Illinois) listed only one state record: an immature bird from inland Tazewell County, 19-20 November 1983. Interestingly, there are now three new Northern Gannet reports from late 1993 for Illinois: this record, an individual seen briefly 6 November in Chicago and a 19 December record from the Mississippi River (See details in a future issue.)*

### Adult male Anhinga in Monroe County

While birding the floodwaters of Fountain Creek in Monroe County near Columbia, Illinois 21 July 1993, I observed a large dark bird perched in a dead willow near an extremely flooded creek. At first, I thought it was a Great Blue Heron, but when I focused my binoculars on the bird some 200 yards away, I knew it was something different. The bird appeared all black with a long thin pale bill. I suspected an Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*).

With my Bushnell Discover 15-60x zoom spotting scope I saw that the bill was pale yellow. I also noticed the long slender black neck as well as the black body and a long tail. Due to poor lighting conditions, I did not get a good look at the eyes, legs, and feet.

The bird was thinly shaped at both ends and sort of chunky in between, resembling a cormorant, but larger than a Great Blue Heron. The tail appeared much thinner than any cormorant's tail. The clinching characteristic was the whitish feathers on the black upper back on both sides of the bird, which was obvious even in the poor light.

Cars and trucks on the levee south of Fountain Creek made the bird nervous. I watched for two minutes before it flew out of sight. On 23 July 1993 I revisited the location (with better lighting conditions) and obtained some photographs. Though small, the photos show the white feathers on the black back of the bird. I watched the bird soar, flap, and spiral upward in the heat thermals and eventually come back down to the flooded creek.

— Keith A. McMullen, 276 Eagle Ridge,  
O'Fallon, IL 62269

### Prairie Falcon in Northern Cook County

On 27 October 1993 Gerald Rosenband observed a Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) flying low over some fields east of the Glenview Naval Air Station airport in northern Cook County. Birders assumed this was going to be a single observer sighting of an unusual migrant falcon until I began receiving multiple reports from others who had spotted a Prairie Falcon at the north end of the airport. The bird was also sighted perched on a tower near a cement company off Old Willow Road which parallels Lehigh Road on the east side of the airport. Most of the time the bird was seen after