



Field Notes drawing of Red-breasted Nuthatch by James P. Zeibol.

Field Notes

The 2007 fall migration

by Douglas F. Stotz

Fall of 2007 had fairly ordinary movements of migrants. The lack of much significant weather meant that fallouts of migrants were few and unimpressive. However, rarities made a good showing. The most notable rarity was a WILSON'S PLOVER at Rainbow Beach on the Chicago lakefront in early August. As usual, Carlyle Lake produced several impressive finds including a November PACIFIC LOON, a NEOTROPIC CORMORANT in September, PARASITIC and LONG-TAILED JAEGERs, an adult GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL in September and November, two November LITTLE GULLs, and an ARCTIC TERN in September. Illinois Beach State Park produced nearly as many rarities as did Lake Carlyle. The Hawk Watch there had an impressive array of rarities including two MISSISSIPPI KITES (one of them in November), two SWAINSON'S HAWKS, a PRAIRIE FALCON (others were in McHenry and Kane Counties this fall), and a COMMON RAVEN (the first accepted record in Illinois since 1953). Other Illinois Beach rarities included YELLOW RAIL in October, and a November CLARK'S NUTCRACKER. Significant rarities elsewhere included 4 WOOD STORKS in Fayette County in August, 3 BLACK RAILS in Monroe and Vermilion Counties (2) in August through October, an August RUFF in McHenry County, a WHITE-WINGED DOVE in Champaign County, a TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE in Henry County, SPRAGUE'S PIPIT at Pyramid State Park, and a Clinton County GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE.

Fall of 2007 was essentially normal for temperature, until the second half of November when temperatures were below normal. August was very wet, but the remainder of the fall had well below average precipitation. Fronts were few and weak resulting in little in the way of strong migratory movements.

Ducks through Hawks

Waterfowl migration was later than usual, with most species not present in significant numbers until the end of October. Numbers of dabbling ducks were generally unimpressive, but there were good counts of all of the regular diving ducks. Scoters were present in smaller numbers than in recent years, with most counts of multiples coming from Lake Michigan. After last year's excellent fall, loons and rare grebes had a mediocre showing, with two Pacific Loons, two Western Grebes, no Red-necked Grebes, and only a small

handful of Red-throated Loons. There were good counts of American White Pelicans from large reservoirs in southern Illinois and along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. There were good heron counts scattered across the state, but especially in July at Horseshoe Lake in Madison County. Most impressive were probably eight American Bitterns in Monroe County in late October, and seven Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at Lake Calumet in August. Two Plegadis ibises were reported. The Illinois Beach Hawk Watch had a stellar season with the rarities mentioned above and record seasonal counts for Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon and single day records for those four species, plus Rough-legged Hawk and American Kestrel. The Greene Valley Hawk Watch continues to develop. It had the largest count of Broad-winged Hawks during a generally poor year for that species, plus impressive single day counts of Sharp-shinned Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. Otherwise, raptors did not make much of a splash this fall.

Rails through Woodpeckers

Rail migration was pretty typical with good numbers of Soras, and small numbers of other species. Sandhill Crane migration was not particularly impressive, with only two large counts received. Movement peaked in the latter half of November and continued into early December. No Whooping Cranes from the reintroduced population were reported to me. Shorebird migration was fairly typical for the most part, with good numbers along the Illinois River and from some downstate lakes. However, heavy rains in late August created temporary flooding at sod farms and a few other sites in northeastern Illinois, resulting in about a ten-day period of unusually high numbers of shorebirds for this part of the state. Although impressive to Chicago-area birders, these numbers were much lower than the counts at shorebird concentrations downstate. Five jaegers were reported, 3 Parasitics, 1 Long-tailed and an unidentified juvenile. Winter gulls arrived late, with few reports before November. As usual, Winthrop Harbor was a mecca for the large white-headed gulls. Two adult California Gulls were photographed in Lake County. Sabine's Gulls were typically present on downstate reservoirs in September and well into October. A single Black-legged Kittiwake in Wilmette was the only one reported. Tern migration was poor. Only Carlyle Lake had reasonable counts, including an impressive 400 Black Terns. On the other hand,