

2 p.m. It was often spotted at about 4 p.m. near the metal tower by Lehigh.

I put the falcon on the Chicago Audubon's rare bird alert which I operate. The falcon was relatively difficult to find. It was typically seen flying either near the airport, the nearby Willow Road garbage dump, or the tower. Many birders were unable to locate the falcon until the "seventh," "tenth," or even the "fifteenth" try.

I was finally successful when my wife Mary and I met Laurie Binford the afternoon of 10 November. We stood near the end of Old Willow Road in Northbrook east of the airport and 100 yards east of the tower. There we looked over vast open fields southeast of the garbage dump on Willow Road. At 2:05 p.m., the Prairie Falcon arrived from the south. Eric Walters and some other birders were close on its tail. They were driving up Lehigh Road to watch the bird which had landed on the tower. Within seconds the bird took off in pursuit of a Mourning Dove which it caught in mid-air and ate on the ground in the same open fields southeast of the garbage dump, about 100 yards to the north and west of the north branch of the Chicago River. Just before dusk we watched the falcon fly off to the west and land on the water tower where it looked as if it were going to roost for the night. Despite several evening searches by birders of the water tower, the falcon was never seen again roosting there.

On 17 November David Johnson videotaped the bird flying north near a small runway building. To the best of my knowledge, the Prairie Falcon was last reported 28 November when many observers saw it at close range with a Questar. Several of them saw an all light blue cere (base of the bill) indicating the bird was an immature. Observers also commented on how strong the dark "armpits" were and how a dark brownish line extended out the underwing to the "wrist."

Bohlen (1989, *The Birds of Illinois*) listed the Prairie Falcon as a rare migrant and winter resident. Mlodinow (1984, *Chicago Area Birds*) listed only three Chicago-area records. This is the first record of a Prairie Falcon seen more than a single day in the Chicago area.

— Richard Biss, 9916 Schiller Blvd.,  
Franklin Park, IL 60131

### Black Rail specimen in Chicago

At dawn 8 October 1993, while other birders were out looking for warblers in the trees or scanning Lake Michigan for migrating raptors and waterfowl, I headed for the cement walkways around the McCormick Place exposition center on Chicago's lakefront. For 15 years, Field Museum of Natural History staff have been making this trek daily during migration as part of a program to salvage birds that have died flying

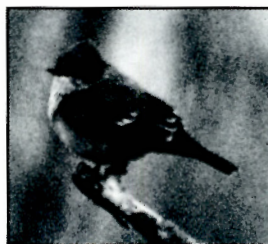
into windows, and to make them into scientifically useful specimens.

A surprise awaited me that morning. Along with some regular October migrants (Hermit Thrush, Swamp and Song Sparrow), there was a Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). I brought the bird back to the Field Museum of Natural History where it was prepared as a study skin and catalogued (FMNH 316952). The bird weighed 28.4 grams, with moderate fat. It was a female with a smooth, small ovary indicating that it had hatched in 1993.

This is the third time we have found this species at McCormick Place. The first record (FMNH 316952), found 19 May 1984, was reported by Bohlen (1989, *The Birds of Illinois*). The second (FMNH 350613), was found 31 May 1989; this record has not been published previously. The third record is our first for the autumn, and one of very few fall records for the state.

Mlodinow (1984, *Chicago Area Birds*) cited only 11 records of the Black Rail for the Chicago area since 1900. Our three records over the last nine years, produced by a glass obstacle rather than by skilled birding, suggest what many have suspected; that Black Rails may be somewhat more common than birders' records would lead us to believe.

— David Willard, Field Museum of Natural History,  
Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive,  
Chicago, IL 60605.



### Lake County's First Vermilion Flycatcher

On 11 October 1993 I was conducting a waterfowl survey in a degraded wetland 1 mile north of the Routes 83 and 60 intersection, near the town of Ivanhoe, Lake County. The site consists primarily of reed canary grass and dense stands of cattail growing along several narrow, linear ditches. Upon arrival, I noted a flycatcher perched on the top of a small tree, occasionally leaving to pursue insects.

Although I was nearly 70 yards from the bird, the brilliant scarlet color contrasting with the dark wings and back made identification of this male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) unmistakable. I quickly moved toward the bird to more easily observe its foraging behaviors. I was able to approach within 20 yards. I watched it from this distance for about 4 minutes as it flew from atop a box elder tree (10 feet in height) to capture flying insects; it made nine

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*Male Vermilion Flycatcher, 14 Oct. 1993, Ivanhoe, IL,  
Lake County. Photo by David B. Johnson. (Above)*