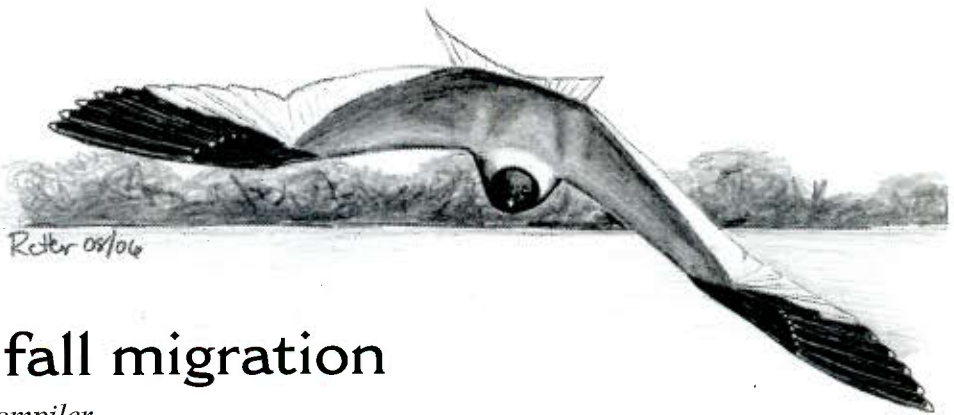


Field Notes



The 2005 fall migration

by Douglas F. Stotz, Compiler

Sabine's Gull drawing by Michael L. P. Retter

Migration in the fall of 2005 was good but not spectacular. Extreme rarities were more poorly represented than in the last few years. Only a WHITE IBIS that lingered from July into August in Champaign County and a BURROWING OWL from October until well into winter stood out. A MURRELET in November at Carlyle (in the wake of last year's Ancient Murrelet) was likely a Long-billed (unrecorded in Illinois, but known from other Midwestern states). Several RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRDS among the swarms of Ruby-throats banded were notable. The season continued the drought conditions that dominated the state throughout summer. Few major storms occurred producing little in the way of significant fall-outs. Hurricane Dennis in July produced major rarities in Illinois (see summer report, Meadowlark 15:19-38), but the much stronger Katrina and Rita did not produce much on the vagrant front. Only a flyover frigatebird in DuPage County seems to have been tied to Katrina. (See story in this issue by Robert Fisher).

Ducks through Hawks

Waterfowl migration was largely on time despite relatively mild conditions. A number of species had strong counts from the downstate reservoirs and along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. Standing out in this regard were 500 Greater White-fronted Geese at Chautauqua, 2200 American Wigeons at Hennepin, 150,000 Mallards at Carlyle Lake, 7915 Green-winged Teal at Chautauqua, 24,000 Canvasbacks in Hancock Co., counts of 1500+ Ring-necked Ducks at Hancock Co, Hennepin, Chautauqua and Carlyle, and 3500 Greater Scaup at Illinois Beach. You'd think that I'd run out of things to say about the booming American White Pelican counts in Illinois, but 10,000 at Carlyle in October was a new record high count for the state, and counts of over 1000 are now regular each fall at numerous locations along the Illinois and Mississippi. Low water through much of the state produced good heron counts in many sites, most notably 32 Snowy Egrets at Horseshoe Lake (Madison Co). Few Black-crowned Night-Herons were reported. The hawk migration survey at Illinois beach produced single-day records for Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and Merlin. On the other hand, Broad-winged Hawk migration was poor there and elsewhere in the state.

Rails through Woodpeckers

Soras were well reported with good counts from several sites. Three King Rail reports is above average in the fall season for this declining and poorly known species. Sandhill Crane migration seemed less impressive than some recent years, although 16,420 at Lake Villa on 17 November is the second best Illinois count. Drought conditions affected shorebird migration tremendously this fall. Low water conditions provided good shorebird conditions in the Lake Calumet area and at some sites on the middle Illinois River in July and August, but continued drought resulted in much of this habitat drying up, so the later migration largely fizzled. Godwits and Red Knots were poorly reported this fall, while Red-necked Phalarope made a good showing downstate. The only jaeger this fall was a Pomarine at Clinton Lake in October. Winter gulls took their time getting to Illinois this fall, and were poorly represented by the end of the fall, but two August Great Black-backs were notably early. A poor lakefront migration (at least in Illinois) for Caspian Terns was balanced by excellent inland counts. Eurasian Collared-Doves have become abundant enough in southern and central Illinois that observers seldom mention them. A White-winged Dove in Edwards County was one few fall records for this species. Most reports of this vagrant come from spring. Good counts of Chimney Swift came from throughout the state from August until early October with eight reports of 150 or more birds, on the other hand, Common Nighthawk numbers were decidedly unimpressive.

Passerines

Flycatchers put in a generally poor showing this fall, especially Empidonax flycatchers and especially along the Lake Michigan lakefront. However, there were several good counts of Eastern Phoebes including 16 at Zion in October. No large concentrations of Purple Martins were reported this fall, but other swallows had good concentrations downstate. Swallows seen along Lake Michigan on 13 November were likely Cave Swallows, which had invaded in force the Great Lakes region in surrounding states, but were not seen well enough in Illinois to document. A Townsend's Solitaire at Lake Forest was a notable rarity. Several Yellow-throated Warblers in northeast-