

of these flights, returning each time to the same branch.

The sun was still well above the horizon (3:30 p.m.) and its position in relation to the bird allowed me to see all the plumage details. The fine flycatcher bill, vermilion crest with some brownish in the forecrown, and salmon-reddish colored underparts with some whitish ground color on the throat and upper breast contrasting with the brownish plumage on its back easily distinguished this as an immature male Vermilion Flycatcher. I continued to watch the bird until 4:10 p.m. as it sallied forth from tree to tree pursuing flying insects.

After leaving, I called several birders to let them know about this very rare vagrant. The next day M.K. Mechtenberg, R. A. Montgomery, and C. Redeker relocated the bird in approximately the same location and confirmed its identification. Several other birders located the bird throughout the week. David Johnson videotaped the bird 13 October. The bird was last seen 18 October.

This is the state's sixth record and the first male observed in fall. A female was recorded in September (Bohlen, *Meadowlark* 2:63) and the others were recorded in April and May (Bohlen 1989, *The Birds of Illinois*). This is Lake County's first record.

The Vermilion Flycatcher, typically associated with wetlands, is widespread in the southwestern United States, ranging south into Central and South America.

— Brad Semel, Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation,
Dundee, IL 60118

Sprague's Pipit record for Champaign County

I began my regular ritual of walking open fields on the University of Illinois' south farms late in the afternoon 27 October 1993. These fields are always good for the regular open field birds. Depending upon the season and the particular individual field makeup, Lapland Longspurs, Smith's Longspurs, American Pipits, and grassland sparrows are frequently found. However, in 18 years of looking, I had not found Sprague's Pipits (*Anthus spragueii*) there. One field, though, always looked good for them, having drier regions near the crest of a long grassy knoll.

As I approached the crest of the knoll I spotted a bird slightly smaller and slimmer than a Horned Lark, with a black tail and extensive white outer tail feathers. As I got close enough to see it on the ground it flew away and alighted farther down field. After flushing it a couple of times, I determined that the bird had a short, slender, warbler-like bill, making it a pipit rather than a Vesper Sparrow or lark. Each time it flew, it showed an almost completely white undertail. Also, I noticed that the bird was very buffy only toward the head and upper chest. The ventral half of the bird

appeared clear of streaks and was very white compared to American Pipits. Finally I was able to see the bird standing in the short vegetation. The back was extensively streaked with light and dark brown. The head was relatively featureless except for streaking on the crown. I also noticed a prominent eye, similar to the eye of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

The bird bolted into the sky and headed toward the end of the field from which it originated. A second bird was flushed that may have been another Sprague's Pipit, but was lost when I concentrated my efforts on the first.

— Robert Chapel, 306 1/2 West California,
Urbana, IL 61801

Editor's note: Sprague's Pipit is difficult to find in Illinois. Mlodinow (1984, Chicago Area Birds) listed only one fall record: 29 September 1974 in Racine County, Wisconsin. Bohlen (1989) listed only five fall dates and three wintering records of birds found by J.W. and R.R. Graber. Todd Fink and W. Douglas Robinson had a spring record: see Meadowlark 1:4 p. 139-140.

Early male Pine Grosbeak at Champaign County

During the afternoon of 26 October 1993 while birding the bottom land of Busey Woods in Urbana, Champaign County, I saw a large bird feeding aggressively on ash seeds at the top of a tree. The bird paid little attention to me as it hopped from branch to branch feeding about 30 feet above me. Leaves had fallen so I could easily see it was a grosbeak. The bird was colored pinkish-red, more pink on the underside, more red on the crown. In addition, I noticed the two narrow, but distinct white wing bars and the characteristic dark grosbeak bill. I closely studied the bird for 15 minutes using my zoom binoculars. I concluded that this was a male Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) and verified my identification with a *Birds of North America* (Robbins, et al., 1983) field guide.

I eliminated similar species such as Red Crossbill which has crossed mandible and no wingbars. White-winged Crossbill looks similar but is smaller and also has crossed mandibles. Purple Finch has no wingbars, is smaller, and has a different bill structure.

watched the grosbeak until it flew across the old river channel near the south shore of the North Pond just a few feet west of the low wide foot bridge. My sighting could be the earliest fall migration date for the species in Illinois.

— Mike Donahue, 159 Chester,
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