



Say's Phoebe drawing by Barbara Williams.

The 2006 fall migration

by Douglas F. Stotz

Fall of 2006 brought a variable migration to Illinois. The landbird and shorebird migrations were unimpressive, but waterbirds were fairly well-represented. Few extreme rarities were reported, but a number of moderate rarities were observed including the following at Lake Carlyle: EURASIAN WIGEON in October, PACIFIC LOON in November, and WESTERN TANAGER in October. A NEOTROPIC CORMORANT was at Horseshoe Lake in September, a RUFF (Reeve) was there in July, and a WHITE IBIS was nearby in July. Four RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRDS were scattered across the state. Two SAY'S PHOEBES were found in northeastern Illinois. A HOARY REDPOLL at Illinois Beach in late November was an extraordinary find in a poor finch year.

Temperatures averaged a bit below average for the fall. The season continued the drought conditions that dominated the state throughout the summer, but beginning in early September, the rest of the fall was wetter than average. Few landbird fallouts were associated with the wet weather. Unlike 2005, Illinois did not witness much in the way of out-of-range birds due to any tropical systems.

Ducks through Hawks

Waterfowl migration was largely on time despite relatively mild conditions. As usual there were good counts of a number of species from the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers as well as Carlyle Lake. Scoters were well-represented both on Lake Michigan and inland in northern Illinois. Downstate, it seemed there were fewer than in the last several years. Loons and grebes were well-represented everywhere. The only Pacific Loon was at Lake Carlyle, but there were good Common Loon counts throughout the state, and Red-throated Loons were extremely well-represented on Lake Michigan into December. After 2005, when no Western Grebes and only one Red-necked Grebe were reported, the seven Western Grebes, and large numbers of Red-necked Grebes were welcome. Big counts of both American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant were typical of recent years. Low water early in the season through much of the state produced good heron counts in many sites, most notably 1000+ Great

Egrets at Carlyle Lake and in the Illinois River valley; 37 Snowy Egrets at Chautauqua, and 425 Little Blue Herons at Horseshoe Lake. There were more Black-crowned Night-Heron reports than recent falls, and several Yellow-crowned Night-Herons lingered at Lake Calumet for much of August and September. A White Ibis and several Plegadis ibises made for an above average fall for this group. Three Swainson's Hawks during migration was an above average number. A second hawk watch at Green Valley Forest Preserve in DuPage County was a welcome addition to the longstanding hawk watch at Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County. Green Valley did not approach Illinois Beach in numbers of common migrants, but had good representation of less common migrants such as Northern Goshawk and Golden Eagle.

Rails through Woodpeckers

Soras were well-reported again this fall, but few reports of Virginia Rail were received. Only one King Rail was reported. Four Yellow Rails at Prairie Ridge in October was impressive. American Coot numbers from the Illinois River were a bit below recent years. Sandhill Crane migration was quite good and high counts were widespread. Significant movement continued into early December. Whooping Cranes from the reintroduced population were seen on a few occasions accompanying Sandhill migration. Shorebird migration was fairly typical, with good numbers along the Illinois River and from some downstate lakes. Rarities were few. The only jaegers noted the fall of 2006 were a Parasitic at Heidecke Lake in September and an unidentified juvenile at Montrose in November. Winter gulls made a fairly good showing this fall, especially at Winthrop Harbor. Three California Gulls for the fall is a good count. This was the best fall for Black-legged Kittiwakes for a number of years, with most birds from Lake Michigan, but there were at least two birds downstate. Tern migration was unimpressive throughout the state. On the other hand, Short-eared Owl migration was very strong, with good counts along the Lake Michigan lakefront, and at quality grasslands inland. There were a number of good counts of Common Nighthawks in late August, including 2,000 at Chicago Botanic Garden, Cook County, and 1,630