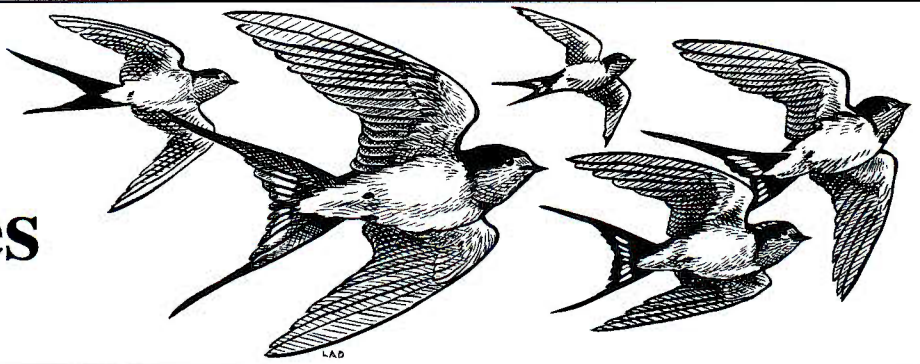


Field Notes



1991 FALL MIGRATION

by Robert Chapel

Bird watchers enjoyed excellent flights of migrants the 1991 fall season. Many also experienced some interesting species invasions and surprises. For example, the usual large numbers of August and September shorebirds passed through the Illinois River Valley. Yet, a surprising number and variety of shorebirds were seen in November especially in the Chicago area.

Gulls made a big showing. Species such as Lesser Black-backed and Little Gull now seem to occur regularly each fall. Bird watchers reported eight Little Gulls and no less than seventeen Lesser Black-backed Gulls. By the end of the fall season, birders had also reported invasions of Northern Goshawks, Snowy Owls, and Common Redpolls.

The fall reporting season began in the midst of a summer drought which lingered through August with above average temperatures and below normal rainfall. A cold front in late September brought record early arrivals of a few species as well as sightings of unusually late passerines. These records appeared to be largely restricted to northeastern Illinois.

The drought broke in October, especially in the central part of the state, where rainfall accumulations of up to eight inches occurred. Two massive back-to-back cold fronts at the end of October and early November brought the best migratory waves of the fall. Large numbers of migrants hugged the Lake Michigan shorelines as well as nearby inland locations. This double blast produced huge numbers of loons, waterfowl, raptors, Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds, jaegers, and gulls.

By the beginning of November, winter gripped most of the state and moderate snowfall blanketed the ground. November temperatures remained well below

normal. Despite unseasonably cold temperatures, many land birds including very late migrants and many lingering shorebirds, sparrows, and even one Ovenbird appeared almost to the end of the fall reporting season.

Thanks go to all observers listed here. First initials of their names are used except for those as indicated below by three initials:

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FIELD NOTES HEADING: Migrating Barn Swallows. Drawing by Leslie A. DeCoursey.