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Ground Dove on the University of Illinois South Farms

On 7 November, 1994, I received a report from Greg Lambeth that he had spotted a Prairie Falcon in South Urbana and adjacent Meadowbrook Park. On 9 November, I took the morning off to search for the falcon. As luck would have it, it was raining steadily with increasing winds out of the northeast when I got up.

Nevertheless, as it got light, I was determined to look for the bird. After driving for several miles and looking for the falcon by car, I decided to brave the rain and search the University of Illinois' South Farms on foot. As I crossed through the area known as Forestry, I came to a sheltered spot along its west side, adjacent to open fields.

A sparrow-sized dove flushed from about 20 feet in front of me and flew with very quick wing beats, noticeably quicker than a Mourning Dove's (*Zenaidura macroura*). I also noted that it had a short, square, dark tail and bright rufous primaries. The bird lacked any rusty wash on the back and upper tail coverts. Although the head was small and the bill dovelike, it had a stout no-neck appearance, compared to larger Mourning Doves. I recognized the bird as a Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*).

I followed the bird with my binoculars until it flew into a dense thicket of brush alongside a flooded stream. I could not determine if the bird landed there or continued on. I searched the South Farms for about an hour, including manured fields where many other birds were feeding. I was unable to relocate the bird among the thousand or so sparrows, finches, doves, starlings, and blackbirds feeding in the fields or along the stream.

This was the first record for a Common Ground-Dove in Champaign County. There have been approximately 10 previous records for Common Ground-Dove in Illinois;

one in the spring, one on a Christmas Count, and the others, like this bird, in late fall (Bohlen 1989).

Robert Chapel
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Invasion of the Sharp-tailed Sparrows

On 25 September, 1994, Rick Seibert and I walked to the shrubby copse near the main swale area in Illinois Beach State Park, Lake County. The main swale was the only one in the complex with standing water at this point. We had seen four Sharp-tailed Sparrows (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) the day before in the spot.

Sure enough, I found six Sharp-tailed Sparrows in one shrub, which I thought pretty spectacular. That is, until Rick found four more in a shrub 10 feet away from the first clump. It was possible to see 10 Sharp-tailed Sparrows at the same time, all within 10 to 12 feet of each other! We added four more as we walked along the rest of the main swale, for a total of 14 Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

Fifteen minutes later, we added at least seven more sharp-tailed farther west, for a grand total of 21 Sharp-tailed Sparrows in one day!

Also seen at Illinois Beach in September 1994 were two Western Sandpipers on the 5th, a White-rumped Sandpiper on the 25th, and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper and a late Piping Plover on the 24th.

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First Winnebago County Record of Ross' Goose

Howard's Farm near Durand is by far the best place in Winnebago County for seeing geese during migration. Each spring and fall, thousands of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) stop along their way to rest. Both color forms of Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) are commonly found with the Canadas. Over the past several years, all species of geese which occur in Illinois have been seen at this farm, except the Ross' Goose (*C. rossii*).