

### Anhinga in southern Illinois

On Monday morning, 14 September 1998, I headed to Rend Lake in southernmost Illinois for another day of fall shorebirding. I was driving my usual route of I-57 north to exit at Sesser or Ina. Just 1 mile north of Johnson City at mile marker 60, my morning of birding got off to an early and excellent start. Flying south over the south bound lanes was a large, glossy black bird with white streaking and large white patches on the upper wings. The neck was long, thin, and fully extended. Tail was very long, fanned out, and rounded in shape. The bill was long, yellow, and pointed.

As I stood on the shoulder of the interstate, the bird flew almost directly over. I know cars whizzing by were wondering what I was watching, but if they could read lips, they would have seen, "Wow, an adult male Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)! Life bird! Awesome!" What a great way to start a day of shorebirding!

There have been less than 10 records of Anhinga listed in Bohlen (1989, *The birds of Illinois*, Indiana Univ. Press) for this century. Robinson (1996, *Southern Illinois Birds: an annotated list and site guide*, Southern Illinois University Press) suggested that future southern Illinois records may come from postbreeding dispersals of Anhinga from Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee where the species breeds—perhaps this was just such a record.

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### Mew Gull in Chicago

On 13 November 1999, I was back in Chicago after a two week trip to Ecuador. I looked at the messages on IBET, called the bird alert, and found that I had missed a major movement in gulls, especially Franklin's Gulls (*Larus pipixcan*), along the Lake Michigan lakefront. So, I decided to check the waters around Grant Park at lunchtime. I started by looking over Burnham Harbor from the west side, where I saw, amid the large numbers of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*), a first year gull that immediately stood out as smaller than the Ring-bills with a smaller, more delicate bill. Its plumage was also substantially darker than the first-year Ring-billed Gulls it accompanied, looking for all the world like a tiny first year Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) in plumage. I suspected that this bird was a first year Mew Gull (*L. canus*), so headed to the east side of the harbor for

a better look. I found the bird still present among the Ring-billed Gulls when I set up at the Yacht Club. Conveniently, a number of Ring-billed Gulls were around the bird for direct comparison. After some study, I concluded that the bird was in fact a first-year Mew Gull. Among the Ring-billed Gulls could be seen larger and smaller individuals, corresponding to male and female birds. Structurally the Mew Gull was clearly smaller than even the smallest Ring-billed Gulls, standing shorter, and being shorter from its bill to the tip of its wings. Especially, though, the small bill stood out, giving it a pigeon-like look. The bill was dark-tipped which contrasted only slightly with a paler base, unlike the first year Ring-billed Gulls, which had clearly bicolored bills.

The plumage was much more extensively brown, especially on the underparts, than the first year Ring-billed Gulls with it, although the brown was paler than that on the Ring-bills. The tail was mostly medium brown, with a little mottling at the base, very unlike a first year Ring-billed Gull's mainly white tail with a narrow, sharply defined black subterminal band.

There have been nearly 20 Mew Gull records accepted in Illinois, mostly from the Lake Michigan lake-front. Oddly, however, as far as I can tell they have all been adults. It seems likely that first year Mew Gulls have been overlooked by Illinois observers, since there is no reason that adults should outnumber immatures so substantially here. Observers should be on the lookout for small dark-plumaged first year birds among flocks of Ring-billed Gulls.

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### Probable King Eider at Evanston

Sunday, 1 November 1998, was a day that I will never forget. Thousands of birds streamed by the Northwestern University Landfill in Evanston. A strong cold front had just come through and strong northeast winds persisted throughout the morning, causing perfect conditions to view ducks and other waterbirds as they flew by along Lake Michigan.

At 8:00 AM, I spotted a larger duck heading towards me from the north in a flock of scaup. My initial reaction