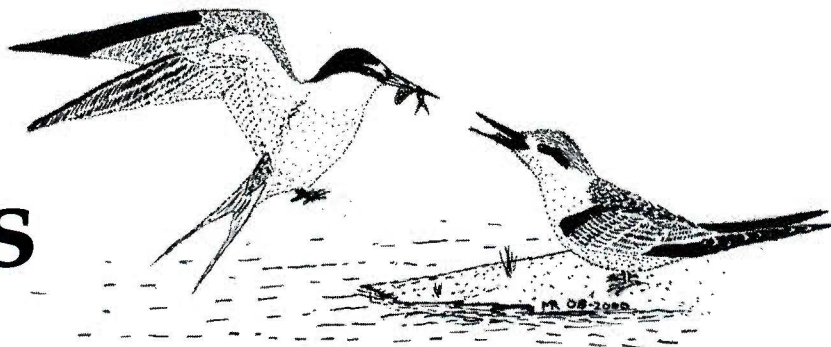


Field Notes



Drawing of Least Terns by Michael Retter.

The 1999 Fall Migration

by Robert T. Chapel

Continuing from the previous summer, the fall was both unusually warm and unusually dry. The near-drought conditions created extensive shorebird habitat in many areas. The warm, dry weather extended to the end of the period, and migration seemed to be drawn out, with few peak days. At the end of the period, many birds were still migrating. Waterfowl migration came late, with the largest numbers seen toward the end of the period. The main flight of geese had not arrived by the beginning of December. Most passerines were reported in expected numbers. Notable late migrants included a **Chuck-will's-widow** on 20-21 Oct inside Chicago's Navy Pier (see seasonal highlights); a Canada Warbler in Urbana on 27 Oct; and an American Redstart in Urbana on 5 Nov. American Pipits are now found regularly on Christmas Bird Counts in southern Illinois. However, a flock of 23 at Lake Shelbyville's Fishhook Wildlife Management Area indicates this species should be expected more often in central Illinois as well. Swallows concentrated on downstate lakes, with an amazing **300,000** Tree Swallows at Carlyle Lake on 2 Oct. Lapland Longspurs were also common downstate, including, oddly, hundreds feeding over the surface of Clinton Lake in early November. Downstate, Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their expansion, especially in southern Illinois, with several reports, including multiple birds.

The extensive mudflats created by droughtlike conditions throughout the state produced concentrations of shorebirds, but often only briefly until the various areas dried up. Consequently, prime areas for shorebirding tended to shift from one locale to another over the course of the fall. As usual, the highest concentrations of shorebirds were in the Illinois River Valley, particularly Chautauqua Lake. Many of the state high counts were again reported from there. The

best shorebird of the season was a **Ruff** (pending acceptance) found at Meredosia Lake (Morgan County).

Despite the warm weather, there were early signs of this being a good year for eruptive species. Red-breasted Nuthatches showed up early and in good numbers and continued to be found in fairly good numbers throughout the period, perhaps representing a normal eruption. Pine Siskins also showed up in fairly good numbers in what appeared to be a typical eruption. White-winged Crossbills also look like a part of a pattern of eruption, as many more sightings than in the last several years were reported. Other irruptive species, such as Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks, were reported, but only in the minimal numbers that occur in non-invasion years. Note that the winter season included some nice numbers of White-winged Crossbills. (See winter season field notes in the next issue.) The big news among irruptive species was made by **Northern Shrikes**. Numerous reports were received (and many others were on the online chat networks) from both northeastern Illinois and central Illinois, indicating there may be a record or near-record year for Northern Shrikes. This trend continued through winter and will be examined further in Vol 9 No. 3 of *Meadowlark*.

Another group that occurred in unprecedented numbers is one that is not normally thought of as irruptive: Jaegers, possibly of all three species, were reported throughout the state during the fall season. Reports were especially numerous from Lake Michigan and downstate's Carlyle Lake. As usual, many sightings were left undocumented and not identified to species. Possibly one or even two **Long-tailed Jaegers** occurred at Carlyle Lake; the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC) has not admitted this species to the Illinois list; a vote is pending.