

One has been expected to show up for several years.

My brother Randy was visiting for Thanksgiving and on 21 November, 1994, we went birding. We were having a great day, starting out with an immature White-winged Scoter, Northern Shrike, and Northern Saw-whet Owl. About noon, we ended up at Howard's Farm. Among the thousands of Canada Geese, we saw several white geese that we figured were probably Snow Geese.

I began scanning with my scope, searching through the many Canadas for something different. I soon came to a group of Blue Geese and saw two very white birds. Were they Snow Geese or Ross' Geese? They appeared to be small, but with their heads in the grass, I couldn't be sure. I positioned the scope so that there was a Blue Goose in the field of view with the two white geese. They were definitely smaller birds. One of the birds finally lifted its head. I could see the short neck and stubby pink bill and immediately knew we had found the first Ross' Goose seen in Winnebago County.

Before we left Howard's Farm, we managed to see Canada Geese, both blue and white Snow Geese and the two Ross' Geese in the scope's field of view at the same time for a great comparison.

A third Ross' Goose was found at Howard's Farm on 25 November, 1994 by Jeff Donaldson. All three geese were present through 6 December 1994, when we were hit with 9 inches of snow and colder weather.

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## Fall Yellow Rails at Illinois Beach State Park

On 10 September, 1994, while Bob Erickson and I were walking back from the far western part of the south swales area of Illinois Beach State Park, Lake Co., we came within 12 to 15 feet of a small rail which flew up from the tall grass in a muddy spot. It landed in the grass about 25 feet away. We hurried to the spot where we thought it landed. It finally flew away again only to land much farther away and disappear in the grass once more. Not wanting to upset the rail any more than we already had, we did not attempt to find it again.

This rail seemed slightly smaller than a Sora and in flight, the white wing patches were clearly marked off from the rest of the wing. The rail's small bill looked greenish-yellow and its face and chest were a buff-orange color. The back showed streaks of buffy-orange and black. We had found a Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*).

On 25 September, 1995, Rick Seibert and I were in the same south swales area, although this time, we were about two blocks away from the area I'd been in on 10 September. We again flushed a Yellow Rail. As before, we relocated it once more, watched it fly in a fairly wide circle and then let it disappear in the 3-foot tall grass.

On both days, the rails were found in fairly tall grass in a muddy swale, away from standing water. Other areas in the swales did have standing water at the time. High grasses made it impossible to observe the rails walking, but our in-flight looks were fairly good, especially on 25 September.

It is possible that the two sightings were different individuals, but there is no way to tell with any certainty.

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## Probable *BRANTA X ANSER* Hybrid

On the morning of 27 November, 1994, an unusual goose was spotted by keeper Diane Bell on the grounds of Brookfield Zoo. The goose was feeding on the large central grassy mall of the zoo with a flock of approximately 50 Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). Diane immediately asked my help in identifying this bird.

We found the goose grazing with a small group of Canadas within the larger flock. It was slightly larger than the Canada Geese and stood out from them due to its pink beak and orange legs and feet. Closer examination showed white feathers on the forehead just above the bill, white cheek patches, and a dark brown/black head and nape. The bird's body looked like a paler version of the Canada Goose, with no markings on the abdomen.

The goose was most probably a hybrid between a Canada Goose and a Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*). Canada Goose hybrids are rare in the wild (Palmer 1976), though single crosses with Greater White-fronted Geese have been reported from California (Baird 1874), Minnesota (Eckert 1970) and Japan (Kuroda 1953).

Canada Geese hybridize fairly freely in captivity (Gray 1958), as do many waterfowl. However, Brookfield Zoo does not keep Canada or Greater White-fronted Geese in the bird collection and has not for at least 20 years. There is no possibility that this bird is the offspring

Meadowlark