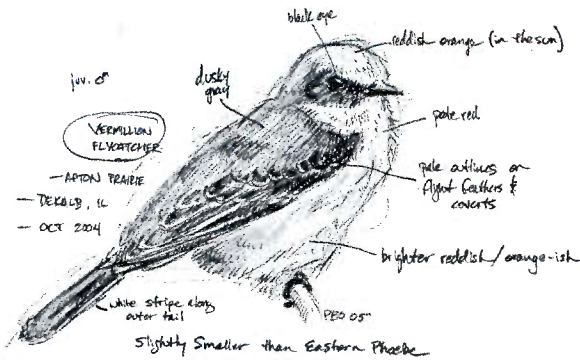


Field Notes

Fall 2004 Migration

by Douglas F. Stotz



Vermilion Flycatcher drawing by Peter Olson.

The fall of 2004 provided birders in Illinois with a good mix of rarities, but there were few fallouts of passerines, and numbers of migrants in most groups were average or below. Shorebirds began moving in early July, and were in full swing by the first of August. Landbirds took their time getting started with the first significant movement at the end of August in northern Illinois. After a reasonably good September in much of the state, the rest of the fall was pretty slow with few fallouts. As usual, the highlights for most birders were the extreme rarities that the state hosted. One species, **INCA DOVE**, at a Carbondale feeder was an addition to the state's avifauna. It was both photographed and videotaped. A number of other very rare species were scattered across the state. The **MOTTLED DUCK**, found at Lake Springfield in May, remained through the period. On the other hand, a **BRANT** and a **SAY'S PHOEBE**, photographed on different days at Afon FP in De Kalb County, were seen only once, despite dozens of birders visiting the site to see the young male **VERMILION FLYCATCHER** that spent nearly a month there. Lake Carlyle as usual was a mecca for birds, with both **PARASITIC** and **LONG-TAILED JAEGER**s there for a couple of weeks in September and an extraordinary **ANCIENT MURRELET** in November. Clinton Lake also attracted much attention this fall with an immature **BROWN PELICAN** (1 of 3 this fall!), and a **BOHEMIAN WAXWING** entertaining many birders there in November. A **FERRUGINOUS HAWK** and a **MEW GULL** also were photographed there in late November, but did not show themselves to more than a single observer. Other rarities included a **WOOD STORK** in Palos in October, a **BLACK SKIMMER** on both sides of the Mississippi on a day in September, a female **GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** in Champaign, and a **LARK BUNTING** at a Kane County forest preserve that evaded everybody's camera, despite being present for more than a month in November and December.

Ducks through Hawks

Waterfowl migration started slowly this fall due to mild weather, and duck numbers were still good through much of the state through the end of the period. Scoters again had a good showing, but unlike the last two years, were mostly on Lake Michigan. There was a scattering of reports on downstate reservoirs. Mergansers and goldeneyes were scarce until the very end of the period, especially Common Merganser. On the other hand, there were several impressive Bufflehead counts in November. Loons made an average showing, with good Common Loon numbers at several sites. Red-throated and Pacific Loons were both represented by scattered, small numbers. Grebes were better represented this fall than during the last several years. Five Western Grebes were reported, including one seen for nearly a month at Lake Chautauqua. Huge White Pelican flocks showed up at the expected sites along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and at Carlyle Lake. Heron counts were pretty ordinary this year, although Little Blue continues to increase in the Lake Calumet area. No ibises were reported this fall. The hawk

migration at Illinois Beach State Park was about average, although there were record days for Red-tailed Hawk and Peregrine Falcon.

Rails through Woodpeckers

Rail reports were few. Observers at Lake Chautauqua regularly reported multiple Soras, but otherwise I received only scattered Virginia Rail and Sora reports. There were no reports of any of the rare species. Moorhens were surprisingly well-reported, but records seemed to represent lingering breeding birds, rather than migrants. Shorebirds were well-represented along the middle Illinois River, but other parts of the state seemed to have below-average numbers and diversity. Phalaropes were well-reported. The only jaegers reported were those at Carlyle Lake. Rare gulls made a good showing, with Sabine's seeming particularly well-represented downstate, especially in mid-September. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were across the state beginning in October; the other rare white-headed gulls were concentrated along the Lake Michigan shoreline. In a reversal of last year, Franklin's Gulls made an impressive appearance in the state, especially downstate, while observers found only small numbers of Laughing Gulls. Tern migration was again poor, although there were some nice concentrations of Black Terns downstate. Yellow-billed Cuckoo records were more numerous than in most recent years, but Black-billed Cuckoos were almost unreported. Nighthawks migrated through northern Illinois in notable numbers during late August; numbers downstate were less impressive. There were several good concentrations of Chimney Swifts, and small numbers lingered at several sites into October, with a few into late October. As in recent years, impressive concentrations of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were noted downstate by banders at feeders. A **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** at a Menard County feeder in November became a specimen after it died, and a gorgeous adult male in McHenry County for several weeks was photographed.

Passerines

Passerine migration was not very strong. There were few significant weather systems, so there was little in the way of major fallouts, and high counts were generally unimpressive. The first big migratory movement in the Chicago area was at the end of August. Warblers on 28 August were arguably the best of the fall in Chicago, and most early season migrants had their high counts and first records then. In the first half of September, although northerly winds predominated, migrants seemed to skip over northern Illinois to a large degree. At this time, observers in east central Illinois had impressive diversity and numbers of migrants, and Larry Hood in west-central Illinois called it the best warbler migration in years. Carlyle Lake had good diversity and high counts as well. Chris Wood's 26 species of warblers on 4 September in Piatt County is especially notable, as were some of the high counts of warblers at this time. After mid-September, migration continued without much in the way of notable waves. Mild weather in October led to good numbers of warblers and some flycatchers well into the month.

Meadowlark