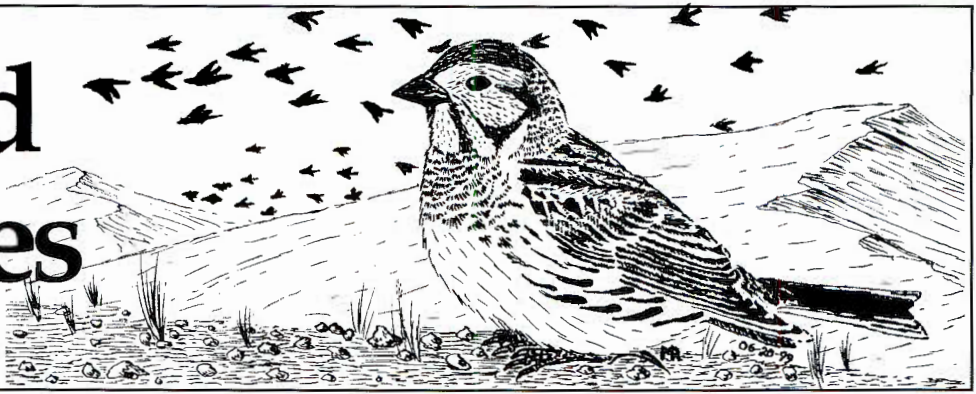


Field Notes



Drawing of Lapland Longspur by Michael Retter.

The 1998 Fall Season

by Robert T. Chapel

This fall was unusually warm each month, closely paralleling the global trend that made 1998 the warmest year on record. The above normal temperatures brought an early onset to migration and prolonged it well into December. Very late stragglers included an amazing Barn Swallow on **6 Dec**, Black-throated Blue Warbler on **26 Nov**, and Pine Warblers to the end of the period. Although it is hard to prove a direct causal effect between weather and the occurrence of specific birds, the two best finds of the fall may have been directly related to specific weather conditions. Illinois' first **WHOOPING CRANE** (see separate story) since 1958 showed up following a massive storm system from the West, with very high winds, while Illinois' first ever **BLACK SKIMMER** (see separate story) was found shortly after Hurricane Earl hit the Gulf Coast. Another weather-related event was a massive fallout caused by a severe storm on 3 Nov. Huge numbers of loons and numerous waterfowl were witnessed on many downstate lakes as well as along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Other good finds this past season were **Pacific Loon** at Clinton Lake, **Anhinga** (see seasonal highlights) in Williamson County, **Tricolored Herons** (see photo in Field Notes) at Springfield and Madison County, **White Ibises** in Monroe County, **Cinnamon Teal** at Carlyle Lake, **Black Rail** at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, **Mew Gull** at Chicago, **two Rufous Hummingbirds** in Springfield, **Say's Phoebe** at Fermi Lab (see seasonal highlights), **Vermilion Flycatcher** at McKee Marsh (see seasonal highlights) (Du Page Co), **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** in Monroe County and in Batavia (see seasonal highlights), and **Mountain Bluebird** at Sangamon Co. The Batavia Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, the Vermilion Flycatcher, and the Say's Phoebe all were seen within 5 miles of one another! In addition to the above, the Mermet Lake **Purple Gallinules** continued to be seen into the early fall. Amazing for where they were

found were a Yellow Rail under a parked car in downtown Chicago (see seasonal highlights and photo) and a Whimbrel eating garbage in a street-corner park on the north edge of Chicago. Other highlights of the season include the above-mentioned loon migration, including good numbers throughout the late fall and several sightings of Red-throated Loons.

American White Pelicans continue to appear in huge numbers in the Illinois and Mississippi River valleys, as they have for the past five years. Sandhill Cranes staged another good migration. A single day sighting of over five thousand birds in Villa Park in Du Page County (and over ten thousand birds at that location for the season) was probably the highlight of their migration. The phenomenal multi-state eastward invasion of Franklin's Gulls, reaching the Atlantic coast, was reflected in the good numbers of Franklin's Gulls seen in Illinois, including 1,000+ seen in a field near Momence.

While there were early movements of Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a few scattered sightings of both Crossbills, there has been no sign that this will be a "winter finch" season. The early nuthatches and siskins apparently passed right through, as few were seen at the end of the period. Northern Shrikes, however, appeared in good numbers, with several making it as far as central Illinois.

Although several observers thought that this fall's passerine migration was exceptionally good, many seasoned veterans failed to be impressed, and the overall numbers bear them out. While some species occurred in good numbers, and there were exceptional numbers of some individuals, including Connecticut Warblers and Black-throated Blue Warblers, the overall impression was of a fairly ordinary migration. However it was far superior in comparison to last Spring's migration, which may have contributed to feelings that it was a better migration than it actually was.

Shorebirds were seen in the expected places and in