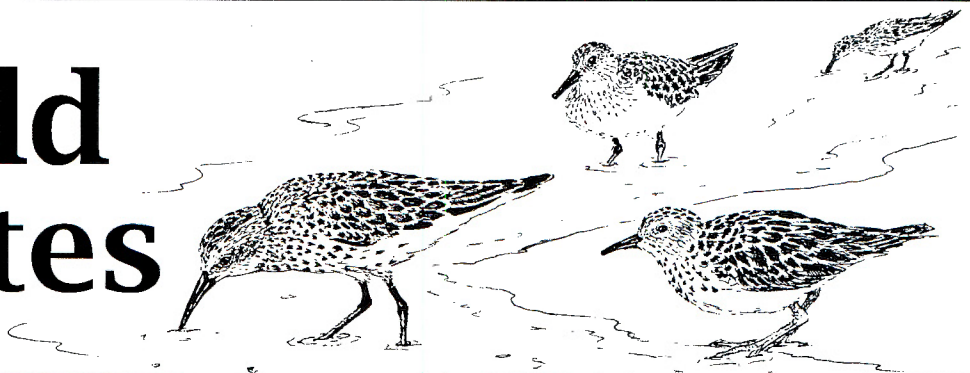


Field Notes



Peeps drawing by David Athans. Western Sandpiper, far left, Baird's Sandpiper middle, Least Sandpiper, right.

The 1995 FALL SEASON

by Robert Chapel

Based on temperatures and precipitation, autumn would have to be considered normal for the first three months. August was wet and had above average temperatures, September was dry and below average and October was near average for those two categories. However, November brought in winter weather with below normal temperatures and an early November snowstorm. This tended to cause an early exodus of migrants, although lingerers continued in near normal numbers.

A strong northern front in mid-October brought a rather spectacular migration statewide on the weekend of October 14 and 15. Hawk-watchers were the first to report in to bird alerts and networks the results of this migration. There were remarkable flights of Merlins on October 14 and accipiters and other hawks both days (see seasonal highlights). There were also large flights of landbirds (see, especially, Palm and Yellow-rumped warblers and White-throated Sparrows) and cormorants. The first big buildup of pelicans at Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge also occurred on this weekend (see seasonal highlights).

The occurrence of rarities, as is often the case, had a western flavor. Just prior to Labor Day weekend, a juvenal Ash-throated Flycatcher was discovered near McCormick Place in Chicago (see article in this issue). Two different cooperative Townsend's Solitaires were discovered in mid-November, in Waukegan and in Rockford (see seasonal highlights). A Mountain Bluebird (see seasonal highlights) was discovered in a remote field in La Salle County at about the same time. A Common Black-headed Gull was reported at Clinton Lake (see seasonal highlights). In addition to these true rarities, Harris' Sparrows made a very good showing in the eastern part of the state, a number of western type Red-tailed Hawks were reported, and two different Western Kingbirds were found. Also, there were a good

number of sightings of Golden Eagles on the state's eastern side. Deviating from the western flavor was an anomalous frigatebird (see seasonal highlights) found in the middle of the Mississippi River near St. Louis and a Neotropical Cormorant found at Channahon in early September. Other rarities are still pending review by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee.

A number of northern species began showing up in good numbers toward the end of the period. Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks were reported in modest numbers and a few White-winged Crossbills and Bohemian Waxwings were located in November. Purple Finches were found in unusually large numbers in the central part of the state. Northern Shrikes were found in good numbers and penetrated the state as far south as Decatur and Springfield. The most noteworthy invader though, at least so far, has been Red-breasted Nuthatch, which staged a large, regionwide influx in September.

Gulls appeared in near normal numbers with a fair number of sightings of the "usual rarities", such as Sabine's Gulls, Little Gulls, kittiwake, and the "winter" gulls. Although total numbers of shorebirds seemed low, there were good numbers of the more unusual species seen, and the shorebirds seemed to linger late into November. There were, especially, a large number of late records for avocets. Ducks were found by aerial surveys in very large numbers in traditional areas. Canvasbacks put in a spectacular appearance on the Mississippi River. Warblers appeared to be a little more scarce than usual, although some species, such as Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Blackpoll, and Palm warblers appeared in above normal numbers, while sparrow numbers seemed to be normal to a little better than normal.

A special thanks is extended to all contributors to this report, who are listed here in full and by initials following each observation: Renee Baade (RBa), Steve Bailey, Beth