



# Field Notes

## The 2001 Fall Season

by Robert T. Chapel

Illinois remained dry throughout the 2001 breeding season, although northeastern Illinois was wetter than normal in August. Normal to wetter than normal conditions prevailed the rest of fall, which was atypically warm, although a brief cool period in late October cleared many late lingering insectivores including Chimney Swifts. November was the third warmest on record. Birds that did not exit in late October lingered throughout the season. Typical November migration (including Sandhill Cranes, loons, and waterfowl) extended indefinitely, with a number of species lingering in good numbers into a mild early December.

The few rarities were fleeting, the most notable being two juvenile WOOD STORKs, including one rescued from a suburban Lombard yard (see article in this issue). The bird died in rehabilitation and the specimen is at Chicago's Field Museum. A LONG-TAILED JAEGER at Carlyle Lake, a third state record, remained one day and disappeared before the IOS field trip there. A GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE delighted many birders in Forest Park for just a few days. A BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH, last summer's most outstanding bird, continued to delight viewers, thanks to the cooperation of the Illinois Beach State Park staff. Also continuing to delight birders were the PAINTED BUNTINGS in East St. Louis. Finally, an intriguing sighting by multiple observers was a *Petrochelidon* swallow, thought to be a CAVE SWALLOW. If accepted by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee, the swallow would be a first state record. Several single-observer sightings also await IORC review.

**Loons - Pelicans:** Scarce in fall 2000, Common Loons appeared in only slightly below normal numbers in fall 2001. They lingered very late into the season, with many still being seen in December. Red-throated and Pacific Loons (2 records) appeared in typical numbers. Horned Grebes were scarcer than usual, while Pied-billed Grebes were in normal numbers. There were only two reports of Western Grebes and one of Red-necked Grebe. American White Pelicans again appeared in great numbers, although the maximum counts in any one locale

were lower compared with recent years. It may be that Carlyle Lake has attracted some of the pelicans from the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge.

**Hérons - Waterfowl:** There were normal numbers of herons, but no ibises reported, which is now unusual. Only a single Tricolored Heron was found. The WOOD STORKs were an extraordinary find in northern Illinois. The hawk watch at Illinois Beach State Park recorded a record single day 195 Turkey Vultures. Waterfowl migration for dabbling ducks was normal. However, the late dabbling ducks did not arrive in numbers by the end of the period, nor had the peak of goose migration occurred. Perhaps indicative of the mild weather, 450 Wood Ducks were found on 18 November at Arcola, well past the usual peak of migration for this species. A record single-site count of 583 Tundra Swans was recorded at Villa Park 19 November.

**Hawks - Cranes:** Illinois Beach S.P. hawk watchers recorded a very good season for many species. Notable totals were single-day high counts of 66 Ospreys (10 September) and 101 Northern Harriers (26 October). Northern Goshawks arrived early in northeastern and east-central Illinois, but there were not many reports. There were six reports of Golden Eagles. Rails were scarce this fall. However, Sandhill Cranes put on quite a show in northeastern Illinois, particularly on 19 November. A single-day high count of **17,351** Sandhill Cranes was obtained at Villa Park, and 3,200 were found in Du Page County the same day. Sandhill migration continued into December. With the mild weather, one wonders if some of these birds were trying to winter locally.

**Shorebirds - Terns:** Illinois' traditional hotspot for fall shorebirds, Lake Chautauqua, started off well, with extensive mudflats due to low water levels in late summer. Unfortunately, vegetation quickly grew, obscuring the lake for observation of shorebirds during the peak of migration. Luckily, Carlyle Lake had excellent shorebird habitat, allowing downstate birders to get their shorebirding fix. Several northeastern Illinois locations also produced shorebirds, although access to some was limited