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Illinois Christmas Bird Count 1993

by David B. Johnson

Birders recorded a total of 159 species in 55 count circles during the annual Christmas Bird Count, held during a 2 and 1/2-week period from 17 December 1993 through 3 January 1994. In addition, three species not on the Illinois checklist were recorded, three Trumpeter Swans in Decatur (recently introduced in Wisconsin), a state high count of 21 Monk Parakeets at Chicago's lakefront (now recognized as countable in some states by the American Birding Association), and Ringed-turtle Dove. An exotic Blue-crowned Parakeet was also observed.

Count week birds included Eared Grebe and two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. The gnatcatcher was a count week first for Illinois. Also recorded

on the count but seen in different states were Western Grebe (Missouri) and Great Black-backed Gull (Indiana).

Once again, those competitive and hard-scouting birders from Rend Lake in southern Illinois recorded more than 100 species (107 to be exact) as well as the highest total individuals. Of the 3,224,037 individuals counted, 3,190,000 were starlings, grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Above average temperatures preceded the 1993 Illinois Christmas Bird Count. After that, temperatures were erratic. Above freezing temperatures were recorded on the first week, but by the second week, highs were in the teens only to rebound to above freezing after 1 January 1994.

The mean low temperature was 27.8 F and the mean high was 35.2 F (Table 1).

Water was totally open in more than 50 percent of the count areas, while the rest had partially frozen water. There was almost no snow cover. Accordingly, observers recorded above-average numbers of herons, waterfowl, and other lingering passerines just before a statewide deep freeze in mid-January 1994.

Data Organization

The 1993/94 CBC data has been organized according to north, central, and southern regions (see map, figure 1). This method better facili-