

## 17 December

(Green Island, Iowa-Illinois)

I began the 120-mile round trip drive to this count at 3:30 a.m., where I joined Ulf Konig for the day. Although the temperature only reached the upper 20s, the wind (5-15mph) lessened throughout the day. The milder conditions left me feeling rejuvenated, and possibly, the birds as well. Our group had an excellent day recording 59 species and 3,088 individual birds. This count produced a number of highlights such as 35 Tundra Swans, 4 Winter Wrens, 3 Hermit Thrushes, a single Brewer's Blackbird and 59 Purple Finches. For those of you keeping track, I had now been awake for 112 consecutive hours.

## 18 December

(Clinton, Iowa-Illinois)

I departed on the 62-mile round trip drive at 2:45 a.m. to meet my field partner Ryan Schmitz. We encountered periodic snow showers during the pre-dawn hours. Following sunrise, the snow ended and the temperature ranged from the upper 20s to the low 30s during the day, with light to moderate winds (5-15 mph). Ten species of waterfowl allowed our group to have a very impressive day. We identified 58 species and recorded 8,843 total

birds. This CBC yielded a paradox of birds including 4 Yellow-rumped Warblers and 6 Snow Buntings. Additionally, we observed 5 each of the Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Harrier, while gulls were extremely scarce within the circle.

## 19 December

(Western Mercer County, Illinois-Iowa)

I left home at 3:15 a.m. and met Steve Hager and Brad Cosentino, to continue the 98-mile round trip drive to this CBC circle. A fairly strong wind (15-25 mph) persisted all day, along with falling temperatures which never exceeded the upper 20s. A substantial wind chill and significant ice cover on most water bodies, kept birds deep in cover and left waterfowl and gulls almost completely absent. These conditions produced a disappointing count, with only 47 species and 2,382 individuals recorded. Notable birds were 14 Northern Bobwhites and 100 Eurasian Tree Sparrows.

## 20 December

(Cedar Rapids, Iowa)

I left at 3:15 a.m. for this 186-mile round trip count. During the first half of the day I worked alone, joining Weir Nelson and Ken Kadlec in the early afternoon.

Temperatures ranged from the low 10s to low 20s with light to moderate winds (0-15 mph). Incredibly, I felt very alert and energized all day considering that I had been awake for 184 consecutive hours. My group recorded 59 species and 2,505 total birds. Among the highlights were single individuals of the Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, and Long-eared Owl, along with 2 Black-crowned Night-Herons and 3 Carolina Wrens.

## 21 December

(Lake Red Rock, Iowa)

I departed at 2 a.m. for this count, which was 358 miles round trip from home. I birded with Jay Gilliam amid relatively strong winds (5-25 mph) and unseasonably mild temperatures (low 30s to upper 40s). Regardless of the decent waterfowl and gull diversity present on the lake, we tallied only 48 species, but with an impressive 26,287 individuals, of which 17,820 were Ring-billed Gulls and 5,100 were Canada Geese. Other noteworthy species included 83 Bald Eagles, 3 Thayer's Gulls, and 2 Glaucous Gulls. During the drive home, I began feeling tired and for the first time started to wonder if I would be able to complete this marathon challenge. (Editor's Note: But Kelly, we've heard that from you before. We know you can do it.)

## 22 December

(Keokuk, Iowa)

I began the 190-mile round trip at 3 a.m. and worked alone all day. The temperatures ranged from the mid 30s to the upper 40 s, while little or no wind (0-5 mph) occurred. A steady, sometimes heavy rain began in the late morning and continued the rest of the day. Still, we had a very good count, with 62

*This Snow Bunting was taken by Robert Hughes in Cook County during the winter 2003/2004 season. It's one species to occasionally expect on some northern Illinois Christmas Bird Counts.*

