

tally open. The previous year we had 12,000 Canada Geese on this lake. This year our team's party of Mike Kutska of River Forest, Josh Engel of Evanston, and my two sons Evan and Daren counted a mere 6,500 geese, but the five Snow Geese were a nice addition. Other birds on the lake included an adult Trumpeter Swan (no collar), 14 Mute Swans, eight Canvasbacks, two Ring-necked Ducks, and a Great Blue Heron. When we weren't staring through the telescopes at waterbirds we chummed for gulls using our secret weapon, Wonder Bread. We often got Ring-billed and Herring Gulls quite close to shore, but no white-wingers were to be had this day.

Driving around our territory, I found an old abandoned, stark, unharvested brussels sprout field with a dirt construction black dirt mound and no birds in sight, until two Horned Larks suddenly double-noted overhead and landed in the bleakest place on earth. With wisps of snow ruffling their plumage they occasionally sang before disappearing over the dirt mound.

I always walk a pine plantation in Gurnee hoping to find a rare owl or two and occasionally coming away with rarities such as an adult Goshawk or Sharp-shinned Hawk. This year's unusual birds in this track included a Great-horned Owl and a Northern Flicker. And just outside the grove I spotted a shrike low in the shrubby field east of the pines. We identified it as a Northern Shrike by the ghostly white crown and back and long, hooked bill plus a broken, bubbled-up eye in the middle of a narrow, black eye-line and light lower mandible. This was clearly a Northern Shrike invasion year.

The Waukegan countdown party is similar to Evanston North Shore's starting with the most to least common species. There were some good ones such as the Western Grebe at Waukegan Harbor (a state-

first CBC record), the loitering Nashville Warbler in a ravine at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, and seven Thayer's Gulls (tied for state CBC all-time high count) along the lakefront. Our lonely two Horned Larks were the only ones for the count. There were several other Northern Shrike reports.

This species was my last bird of the nine-count CBC season, bringing my total to 105 species (not including

Trumpeter Swan) and an estimated 500,000 individual birds. I had driven some 1,500 miles, hiked 20 miles, owled four hours, and hardly slept.

Would I ever stop counting? I guessed nine CBCs in one season was enough. Will anyone try 10 this year?

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The Illinois 1994 Christmas Bird Count

by David B. Johnson and Alan F. Stokie



Mild weather during the fall of 1994 in Illinois also prevailed during the 1994 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period. Only 39 percent of the northern counts had any snow cover. Fifty-four percent of the counts had totally open water while the remaining had only partially frozen water. The mean low temperature was 27.5 F, the mean high 39.5 F (see table 1), 4 degrees higher than the 1993 CBC season. These weather conditions provided for excellent concentrations of lingering waterfowl and sparrows. Observers set 33 new all-time high counts for species in Illinois.

Fifty-nine count tallies were

submitted representing 155 species. Rend Lake recorded 102 species, making it three consecutive years with more than 100. Four other counts recorded 90 species or higher. Cypress Creek had 98, as well as the highest number of individuals (1,083,908) and the highest number of new all-time high counts (9). Union County recorded 92 species; Horseshoe Lake and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge each recorded 90.

The stellar find, and new to the state's Christmas count species list, was the near adult male **King Eider** recorded at Heidecke Lake, Grundy County on the Morris-Wilmington Count. Also new to the state CBC list were Waukegan's **Western Grebe** and Rend Lake's **Greater Yellow-**

The sub-adult male King Eider, above, photographed 27 Jan. 1995 was initially found 2 Jan. 1995 on the Morris-Wilmington Christmas Bird Count at Heidecke Lake, Grundy County. This represents the first Illinois CBC record. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.
