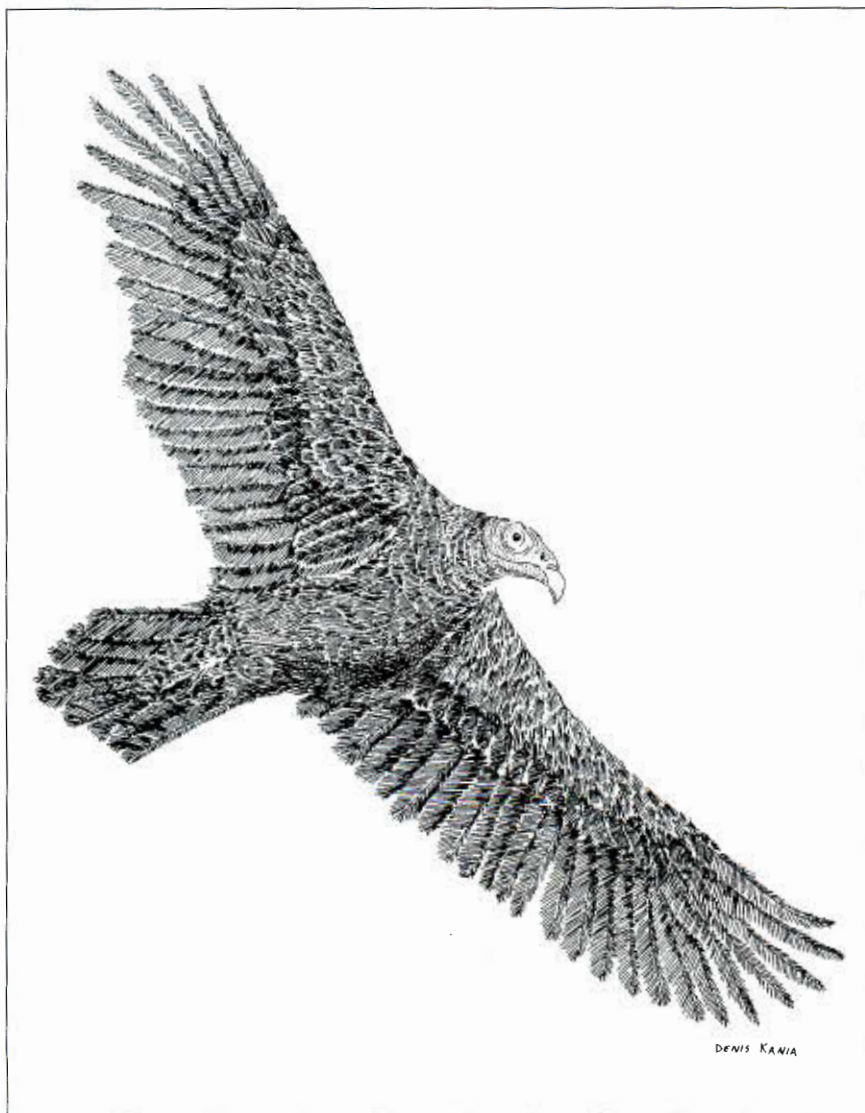


The Illinois 1996 Christmas Bird Count

By David B. Johnson and Alan F. Stokie

We dedicate this report to Pete Petersen, who died this summer after a long bout with cancer. By the end of the 1996 Christmas Bird Count season Pete had completed 242 CBCs and compiled 179! His untiring CBC efforts have long been appreciated by Illinois birders. We will miss him greatly and will long remember him for his dedication and commitment to birding in our state as well as his home state of Iowa.



Three Turkey Vultures were recorded on the Fermi-Lab Christmas Bird Count. Drawing by Denis Kania.

Illinois birders marching through their appointed territories within 59 count circles encountered many avian surprises such as high numbers of unusual geese, an irruption of Snowy Owls, and several new species records during the 1996 Christmas Bird Count Season.

As in the 1995 CBC season, early cold fronts pushed many water and land birds out of the state. Temperatures on count days were normal and snow cover was minimal. Most of the count circles had frozen water. The mean low temperature was about 30 degrees F; the mean high was 39 degrees F.

The hoped-for dispersal of montane species from the west into Illinois did occur but was only detected by 59 Red Crossbills in 2 count circles and an ultra rare vagrant and first state record for **Band-tailed Pigeon**.

Of course, there were additional sprinklings of rarities, unusual high and low counts as observers hiked, drove, and canoed over territories in search of more data on early winter bird distribution in Illinois.

Results included 149 species plus 3 exotics: Chukar (in Iowa), Monk Parakeet, and Ringed Turtle-Dove or Collared-Dove. No count recorded 100 or more species; only