

The 2009/2010 Illinois Christmas Bird Count

By Paul Sweet

The 2009/2010 Illinois CBC season produced cold temperatures for most of the period. Fourteen counts reported highs below 20 degrees, with four counts only in the single digits. Twenty-five counts reached the freezing mark, but only five hit 40 degrees, with only Cypress Creek surpassing the 50 degree mark. In contrast, the previous CBC season included 14 counts with highs of more than 50 degrees.

Sixty-three counts reported this year, with 1,038 observers totaling 3,175 party-hours. Feeder watchers were down slightly from last year, with 252 observers putting in 664 hours. As usual, Fermilab led the field in observers, with 108, and Waukegan had the most feeder watchers with 63. All of this effort produced sightings of 173 species, with two more species recorded during the count period. Union County reported 107 species, and two other counts reported at least 100 species.

A lingering Caspian Tern at Calumet City and a well-described Eastern Kingbird are new to the state. In odd contrast to the cold weather this season, late fall migrants were the most notable, with 33 species of waterfowl and seven species of warblers among them.

Ducks through Herons

Canada Goose and Snow Goose numbers were 30 percent and 40 percent below last year's numbers, respectively, while Greater White-fronted and Cackling Geese were 40 percent and 1855 percent above last year's totals. Trumpeter Swans were only reported on nine counts, for a total of 71. Five of these counts were along the Mississippi River. The 31 seen in Union County represented a new state high. Twenty-two Tundra Swans were reported on five counts. Ducks showed a pattern similar to geese – for example, Canvasback showed an 85 percent decrease, while Ring-necked Ducks increased by 85 percent. Four Blue-winged Teal were reported on three counts.

Harlequin Ducks were reported at Calumet City and Chicago Lakefront. A count week Surf Scoter was at



A Carolina Wren perches at a suet feeder in Mundelein, Lake County in December 2009. This bird was documented on the 2009/2010 Illinois Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Mike Trahan.

Carlyle Lake, two more were seen at Princeton-Comanche on count day, a count week Black Scoter was at Chicago Lakefront, and a count day Black Scoter was at Waukegan. Clinton, Iowa had five White-winged Scoters. Long-tailed Ducks appear to have disappeared from Lake Michigan – of seven reported, three were at Carlyle, two at Van Petten, and two at Davenport. Collinsville reported one count week – again away from Lake Michigan. A Barrow's Goldeneye at Peoria was the first reported in more than 40 years. The 2,954 Red-breasted Merganser at Evanston represented a new state high.

Ring-necked Pheasant were reported on 29 counts, but only 195 were spotted, a 35 percent drop from last season's already low total. Newton reported 74 Greater Prairie-Chickens, similar to last year's 77. Northern Bobwhite and Wild Turkey numbers were typical. For the third year in a row, Gray Partridge went unrecorded.

Four Common Loons were recorded on two counts. Red-throated Loon was not recorded this year. Jackson