

Waukegan had 2 Virginia Rails. The only woodcocks were at Schapville and Union County.

Raptors

The 4 well-documented occurrences of Turkey Vultures in northern Illinois were unusual (3 at Fermilab-Batavia and one at Joliet) as were the 26 Turkey Vultures at Middle Fork River Valley in central Illinois. Bald Eagle numbers seem to be leveling at record numbers (see histogram). Four Golden Eagles were recorded in southern Illinois on 3 counts, Crane Lake, Cypress Creek, and Union (2 birds). Ninety-four Rough-legged Hawks were noted in 36 count circles. The only Merlins were singles at Rockford and Meredosia Island and a count-week bird at Kishwaukee.

Barrington had the highest count of 10 Long-eared Owls. Cypress Creek recorded 13 Short-eared Owls and Fermilab Batavia was close behind with 12. Only 3 Northern Saw-whet Owls were recorded, all in central Illinois, Middle Fork River Valley, Forest Glen Preserve, and Western Mercer. See irruptive species below for an account of Snowy Owls.

Passerines

House Finch numbers continue to rise (see histogram). The Eurasian Tree Sparrow movement up the western Illinois river valleys was best noted by Western Mercer's count circle/record of 91 birds. Meredosia Island's 581 was also a remarkable number.

A conspicuous miss this year was the Gray Partridge. Compilers also noted a decline in Ring-necked Pheasant numbers.

Three well-described Marsh Wrens were recorded, singles at Calumet City—Sand Ridge, Rockford, and Middle Fork River Valley. The only House Wrens were at Springfield and Clinton Lake. Two Eastern Phoebe

were recorded, surprisingly both in northern Illinois at Calumet City—Sand Ridge and Fermilab—Batavia. Twenty-three American Pipits were at Horseshoe Lake. Decatur recorded the only Gray Catbird. Single Spotted Towhees were tallied at Barrington, Meredosia Island, and Union County. Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds were noted, one in northern Illinois at Calumet City—Sand Ridge and the other at Rend Lake in southern Illinois. The only accepted Brewer's Blackbird was at Fermilab—Batavia. Immature Indigo Buntings were at Carlyle and Horseshoe Lake CBCs. The only Le Conte's Sparrows were at Cypress Creek and Horseshoe Lake. The only unusual warblers were two well-described Pines at Union and Warbluff Valley.

Irruptive Species

The best irruptive species was the Snowy Owl. Chicago lakefront recorded a near-record 7 individuals (8 is the state record—Calumet City—Sand Ridge, 1981 CBC). Sixteen Snowy Owls were recorded in the state (in 5 count circles). Illini, the only inland count to record this species, had 2 Snowies along a nuclear power plant dike. A remarkable southern Illinois Snowy Owl was recorded during count week at Carlyle Lake.

The expected irruption of Red Crossbills was noted on the Chautauqua NWR with 58 individuals in Mason State Forest. The only other count record of this species was a solitary bird at Rockford and two count-week birds at Meredosia Island. Northern Shrike numbers returned to normal after last year's invasion with 18 individuals (54 in 1995) in 10 count circles. Other winter finches were almost nil. Fifty-seven Pine Siskins were reported in 14 count circles and 7 Common Redpolls were reported in 4 count circles. No Evening Grosbeaks were counted. After two good-number years, the

Red-breasted Nuthatch was recorded at a 10-year low (see histogram).

High Counts

Observers set 10 new all-time state high counts of individuals recorded within a count circle. All-time high state counts included 162 Great Blue Herons at Rend Lake and 244 Mute Swans at Calumet City—Sand Ridge. Burgeoning unusual geese numbers included an all-time high count for 3 species: 600 Greater White-fronted Geese at Cypress Creek, 53,394 Snow Geese at Pere Marquette, and an amazing 16 Ross's Geese at Union County (13 at Horseshoe Lake). The 3 Ross's Geese at Fermilab-Batavia and 1 at Bloomington were first CBC records for northern and central Illinois. The 36 Bald Eagles at Peoria were a new count high as were the 24 at Starved Rock. Middle Fork River Valley's 255,000 American Crows at a Danville roost site defies imagination. Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" has reached Illinois! This crow count was measured and re-measured both on count day and several weeks after. Horseshoe Lake recorded a record 312 Carolina Wrens and 1,498 White-throated Sparrows. Although not a record high count, Chicago Urban birders recorded a remarkable 46 White-throated Sparrows in downtown Chicago—singing among the skyscrapers at dawn. One-hundred-eleven Ringed Turtle-Doves was a new record at Joliet. Carlyle Lake recorded an impressive state-high 1,370 American Goldfinches.

Identification Problems

Lincoln's Sparrows and Brewer's Blackbirds continue to present difficult field identification problems on CBCs. These species require meticulous descriptions and photographs to insure proper documentation. Several descriptions submitted this season of Lincoln's Sparrows