

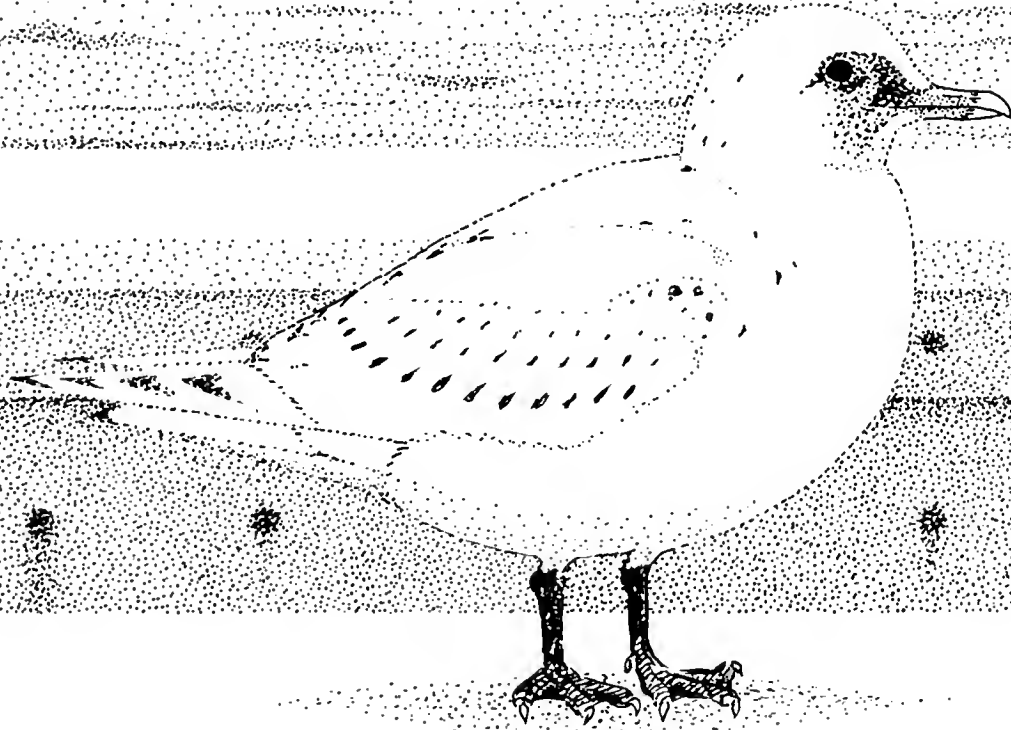
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Meadowlark

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Volume 1, Number 3

1992



WM '92

Illinois Ornithological Society



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Winter memories

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Two phantoms of the north graced Illinois with their presence last winter, creating lasting memories. Snowy Owls invaded Illinois reaching as far south as Franklin County. The owls didn't know they were making a record of the second largest flight in the state's history, but David B. Johnson, author of our lead article, "Snowy Owl Invasion," did.

Meanwhile, the rare appearance of an Ivory Gull in Chicago's harbors created a stir not only among birders, but also among local press who wondered why anyone would stand outside on a frigid, blustery winter day to see a plain old white seagull with a dirty face. There's no use trying to explain why to a non-birder. Instead, just relish your search for rare gulls and owls this winter. And when you're not out birding, settle in next to a roaring fire and enjoy our winter issue, a tribute to the phantom birds of the north.

Meadowlark

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's amazing how fast we have grown in a year. We've added new members and volunteers and are planning some exciting field trips. Our swift progress is due to the fact that so many birders are interested in pursuing the goals of IOS. That's good news for all of us. If, this winter, you discover some folks gathered around a fireplace in a poorly lit room sharing tales of rare finds and birding adventures, you've probably found some fellow IOS members. From everyone at IOS, good birding in the new year.

Eric Walters

ABOUT OUR COVER ILLUSTRATOR

Walter Marcisz drew the Ivory Gull which visited the Chicago lakefront during the winter of 1991-92. Marcisz is Art/Layout Editor of *Meadowlark* and a past president of the Chicago Ornithological Society. His illustrations have appeared in *Birding*, *Meadowlark*, *Compass*, and the *Chicago Birder*.

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SNOWY OWL INVASION

*Illinois birders witness
second largest flight in state's history*

by David B. Johnson



Snowy Owls, Montrose Harbor, Chicago, December 1991. (Kanae Hirabayashi photo)

Dawn. Early November 1991. DuPage County. Dick Young drives a school bus down a country road at twilight. A large white bird flies across the road in front of him.

Mid-November. Illinois Beach State Park. Photographer Dana Hansen walks along the rocky shores when a large white bird flies out from nearby rocks and lands on the beach in front of her.

December 23. Champaign County. An Illinois State Trooper finds a large white bird with a broken wing along Interstate 57. He takes the bird to an animal clinic.

January 20, 1992. Lake County. Richard Myslinski observes crows mobbing a large white bird on top of a light pole by a "mega-strip" mall named Gurnee Mills. The bird, with large yellow eyes and light brownish barring, is seen later that day huddled on a snowy wisp of a rise in a corn stubble field oblivious to the traffic 50 feet away.

January 25. Waukegan. A city worker, stopped at a light during a snowstorm, notices a large white bird "flopping around" inside the second floor mezzanine of an old abandoned hotel.

Scenes like those were played out again and again during the winter of 1991/92 as Illinois birders, lucky enough to spot the white phantom of the north, witnessed the state's second largest winter invasion of Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*). For them, the experience was more than just checking a bird off on a list. Rather, the image of a feathered nomad encountered in an area much to the south of its normal wintering range and often in bizarre circumstances will remain a vivid memory.

Adult male Snowy Owls are pure white with little dark flecking or barring. Males usually have more white space between their finer barring, while the much larger females have thicker, heavier barring. The bars nearly touch giving the female a sooty appearance; however, separating species by this method can be difficult, especially when observing immatures (Josephson, 1980.)

Called Ook Pik Juak (snowy bird) by Eskimos, Snowy Owls rely on lemmings, other rodents, and birds such as ptarmigan, plovers, and buntings to sustain themselves and their young. Populations of lemmings

naturally fluctuate, which then affects the Snowy Owl population.

When lemmings are abundant, the nesting clutch size of a Snowy Owl might be 12 or 13, much larger than the normal five to seven egg clutch size. The snowy's nest is usually placed on a hillock or rise in the tundra. Many of the young fall prey to Arctic foxes or jaegers.

When the lemming population crashes, Snowy Owls often wander far south of their normal Arctic wintering area. During invasion years, snowies appear in fields and on shores and harbors sometimes as far as the central to southern United States. Snowy Owls are opportunistic during these invasions, often feeding on sea ducks, rats, squirrels, rabbits, and city pigeons. Their quest for food can lead them to some desperate circumstances and also explains why they are found during invasion years in some strange places.

The Illinois invasion began 8 November 1991 when Dick Young spotted a Snowy Owl in front of his school bus. It ended 9 April 1992 when someone spotted a Snowy Owl perched

on a light post by a United Airlines terminal at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

The bulk of Illinois' Snowy Owl invasion occurred in November and December when 32 of the 46 Snowy Owls seen were recorded. In January, 12 Snowy Owls were recorded in Illinois. Observers reported one Snowy Owl each in the months of February, March, and April. The March sighting could have been a previously-seen bird at Montrose Harbor in Chicago, according to Kanae Hirabayashi, a Chicago area birder.

Richard Biss, who operates the Chicago Audubon Society rare bird alert, and Hirabayashi spent many hours helping me eliminate possible duplicate sightings of Snowy Owls along Chicago's lakefront.

This invasion is surpassed only by the winter of 1980/81 when 59 Snowy Owls were recorded throughout the state (Kleen, 1981.) Other high flight years have occurred in the state but the numbers and extent of these invasions were not thoroughly documented (Bohlen, 1989.)

SHORELINE VISITORS

In both the 1980/81 and 1991/92 flights, many Snowy Owls were discovered along Lake Michigan's shores. Last winter, observers spotted five along Lake County's shoreline and 19 along Cook County's shoreline. Eight Snowy Owls were recorded at Montrose Harbor in Chicago and five at the Meigs Field/Burnham Harbor/Shedd Aquarium breakwater area. Several birds that met with misfortune were also discovered. An Illinois state trooper found a Snowy Owl with a broken wing along I-57 in Champaign County. Another injured bird was discovered in Lee County.

Another bird that was thought to be injured was discovered by an Adams County Sheriff along highway 24 near Quincy. When he saw a Snowy Owl with blood all over its chest, the

concerned sheriff contacted wildlife rehabilitator Ed Adcox. What Adcox discovered was a perfectly healthy Snowy Owl with a duck in its talons.

Adcox observed the owl for five days during which time the bird enjoyed a meal of three ducks. The owl was then released not to be seen again.

Snowy Owls could not be relocated during this winter's invasion except for those in just a few areas such as Montrose Harbor, Meigs Field, and in Menard and Kankakee counties. Most of the birds were seen one day only and probably were immature females, which are not as prone to territory establishment as males, according to David Evans, an owl bander in the Duluth, Minnesota area.

During the 1980/81 winter invasion, many Snowy Owls stayed at the same locations for days, weeks, and even

months at a time, particularly along the Chicago lakefront and at the Lake Calumet region where sometimes five at a time could be seen. Last winter, only one bird was reported from the Lake Calumet area and that was for one day only.

The recent invasion was confined largely to the upper one-third of the state (see Figure 1), whereas, during the winter of 1980/81 quite a few Snowy Owls made it to the central part of the state and even lower with one recorded in Union County in southern Illinois. (See Figure 2)

Last winter's farthest south record occurred two counties to the north at Rend Lake in Franklin County. Another downstate sighting was at Clinton County at Carlyle Lake when an observer saw an individual Snowy Owl at night on top of a light post in a parking lot in late November.



Snowy Owl, Montrose Harbor, Chicago, 27 November 1991. (Robert Hughes photo)

The phantom Snowy Owls, here one day and gone the next, fascinated Illinois birders. Hirabayashi first noticed a snowy with a distinct dark and white V-patterned head at Montrose Harbor in early November. She saw the bird throughout the month and into December and then finally, or so she thought, at the beginning of January.

"Then much to my amazement, it came back to Montrose on March 8," she recalled. "The same bird with the distinct patterned head." Since adult Snowy Owls will often displace immatures on their winter territories, Hirabayashi's bird could have been a juvenile that was displaced and then later returned migrating back north.

While Hirabayashi was enjoying this Snowy Owl's presence in late December and early January, Jim Neal was discovering another bird at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center during the Waukegan Christmas bird count on New Year's Day.

He later revisited and identified this Snowy Owl under the most peculiar circumstances. On 27 January, Neal, Danny Diaz, and Jim and Wendy Solum entered the abandoned Waukegan Hotel building near Lake Michigan at night to search for a Snowy Owl reported by a city worker as a "large white bird flying around" on the second floor.

NIGHTTIME SEARCH

On that frigid evening, the four owl prowlers entered the building in the dark and walked the two flights to where the bird was seen. There sitting on

stacks of old tables with eyes closed was a Snowy Owl. "I recognize him," said Neal. "This is the bird that's been out at the harbor. It has that real black mark on its head."

"And look at the beard on him," Diaz whispered.

Diaz and the other observers surmised that the only way the owl could have entered the building was from the 14th floor through a large open window when it may have been chasing a pigeon at dusk.

'On that frigid evening, the four owl prowlers entered the building in the dark and walked the two flights to where the bird was seen. There sitting on stacks of old tables with eyes closed was a Snowy Owl.'

After analyzing the bird's details to prove Neal's theory, they carefully trapped the bird with a bass fisherman's net intending to take it to the harbor. The owl stretched its wings, widened its bright yellow eyes, and snapped its bill in protest.

Neal then gently stroked the bird. When the bird was sufficiently calm, the birders released it at Waukegan Harbor at midnight. It was never seen again.

"Such bizarre occurrences

NEARBY REGIONS RECORDED SNOWY OWL INVASIONS LAST WINTER

The extent of the Snowy Owl invasion in nearby states and regions to the north was well documented and for some areas this winter's Snowy Owl invasion was the largest on record.

Minnesota, as of this writing, had recorded 120 Snowy Owls, their largest invasion ever, according to Kim Eckert, a Duluth area birder. David Evans banded 33 Snowy Owls during the 1991/92 flight.

The Canadian Ontario region by the end of November 1991 had recorded an astounding 201 individuals (American Birds 46:1.) Whitefish Point Bird Observatory had recorded 21 Snowy Owls in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan by 15 November 1991 and Wisconsin reported 18 on its Christmas Bird Count. Farther south, one Snowy Owl was reported in Kentucky 10 November 1991.

It might be noted that regions to the north had record numbers of Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls last winter. Perhaps that was due to a vole crash that happened to coincide with a lemming crash and possibly other owl prey availability in the boreal forest and Arctic circumpolar regions.

-David B. Johnson

are not unusual during Snowy Owl invasions, especially when birds are hungry," said Evans, the bander from Minnesota. Indeed, Evans had his own Snowy Owl story to relate, one perhaps even more amazing than the Waukegan hotel story.

While radio tracking a female Snowy Owl one winter, Evans picked up the location signal but could not visually locate her. Finally, 10 days later, he realized that she was trapped in a 100-foot high chimney. "The owl was probably chasing a pigeon at dusk and got caught inside the chimney," he theorized.

Evans dropped a live pigeon down the chimney so that the owl wouldn't starve. The next day after searching five compartments in the chimney, Evans located several dead pigeon carcasses, three live pigeons, a dead Snowy Owl, and finally his live radio-tagged female Snowy Owl at the bottom of the chimney.

"After I captured and released the female," recalled Evans, "she never went near that part of town for the remainder of that winter."

"Often snowies will follow prey into an open window or chimney even if it would be impossible for them to fly back out again. They get trapped and often perish," he said. Thus, it can be a bittersweet memory for Illinois birders to witness a Snowy Owl invasion, knowing the birds are there because food is scarce.

Still, Illinois birders will never forget the image of the 23-inch long, round-headed, yellow-eyed phantom of the north. I know I will never forget the day Richard Myslinski called me

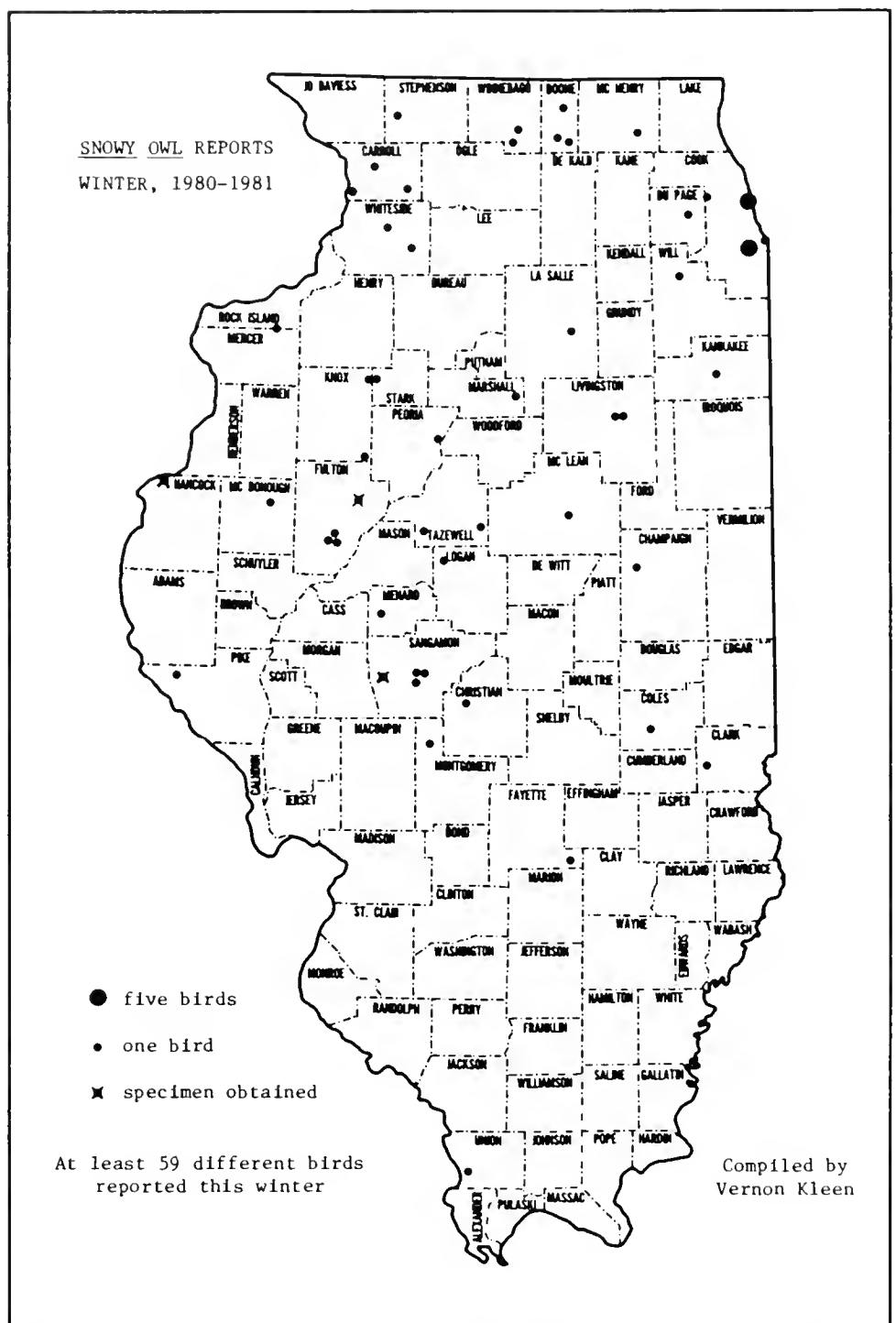


Figure 1. Snowy Owl invasion, winter, 1980-81. Map reprinted with permission from "Winter Season Field Notes," *Illinois Audubon Bulletin*, 1981. Compiled by Vernon M. Kleen.

while I was at work to tell me about a Snowy Owl he had seen nearby.

I rushed to the site, dragging others away from work who had never seen a Snowy Owl. There we stood watching this immense, beautiful bird. "I'm

amazed at how well the Snowy Owl's plumage blends in with the surrounding snow field," said Mike Ward of Lake Villa. "He seems so tame and motionless. He's just sitting there quietly so close to the road."

Beverly Ford of Chicago said,

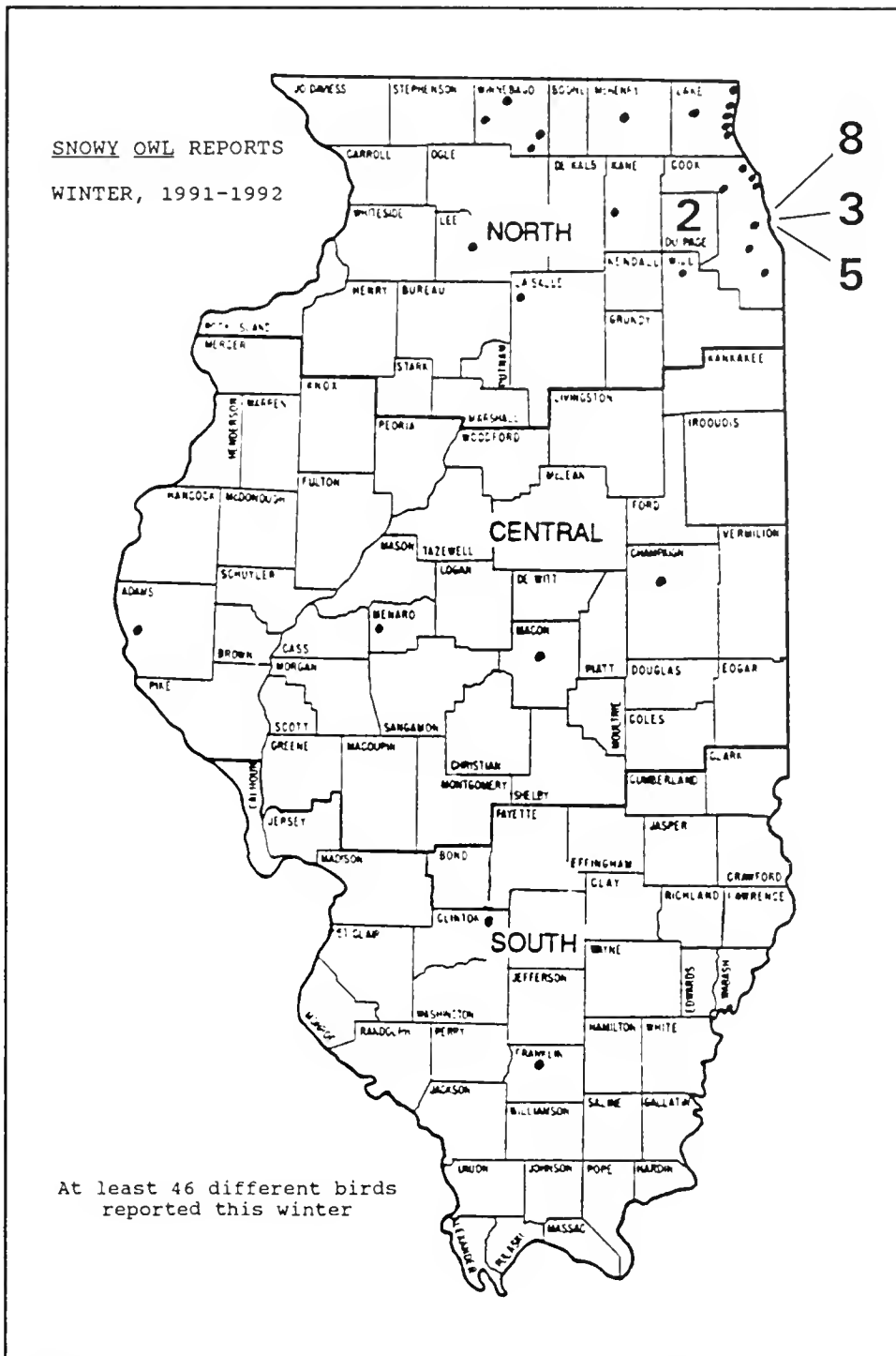


Figure 2. Snowy Owl invasion, winter, 1991-92. Black dots = single bird sightings. Bold-faced numbers = multiple bird sightings as follows: **8** owls at Montrose/Lincoln Park; **3** owls at Fullerton/North Ave./Navy Pier; **5** owls at Aquarium/Meigs Field/Burnham Harbor; **2** owls at DuPage Co.

"It's so interesting that the bird is sitting on the ground in the field. I didn't quite expect that."

Ford and Ward said they remembered that first time sighting weeks later. I, too, remember my first sighting of a

Snowy Owl in the wild, even though it has been many years. I remember a gorgeous white-feathered bird on a telephone pole.

Still, the sighting last winter inspired me as much as it did my friends who saw their first

Snowy Owl during the second largest invasion in Illinois history.

I would like to thank all Illinois observers who shared their Snowy Owl sightings with me. I am particularly grateful to Richard Biss and Kanae Hirabayashi for sorting out the many Chicago lakefront Snowy Owl sightings and for their excellent record keeping. Thanks also go to Kanae Hirabayashi, Robert Hughes, Danny Diaz, Dana Hansen, and Jim Solum for sharing their Snowy Owl photographs and video tapes. I also appreciate David Evans and Kim Eckert of Duluth, Minnesota who shared their records and Snowy Owl experiences with me. ■

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Owl Prowl

by Sheryl De Vore

At 5:30 a.m. on a Sunday in mid-February when it is still black as a raven outside, we stand near a northern Illinois wood lot shivering and waiting in the quiet. A light cloud cover diffuses the nearly full moon.

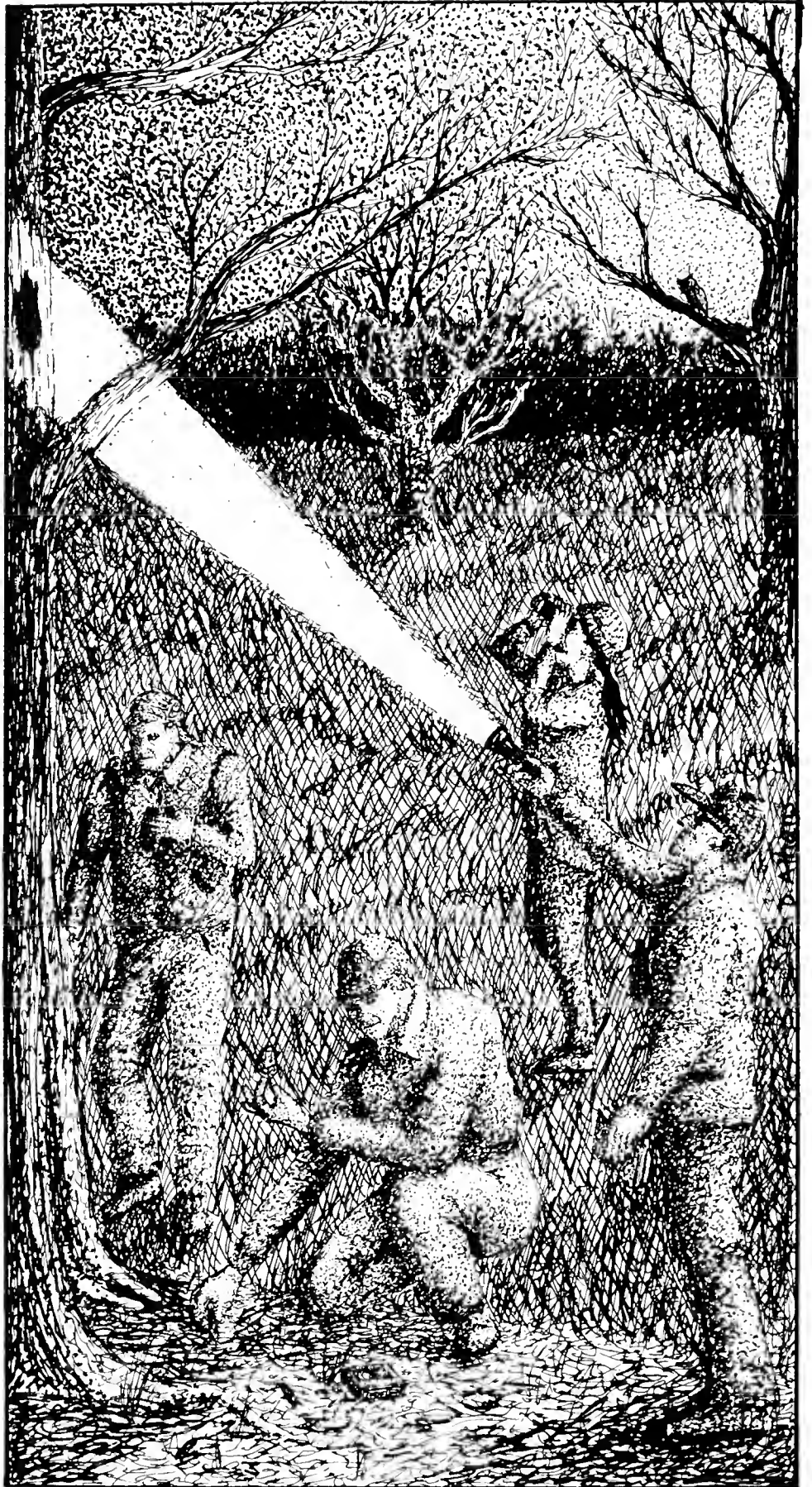
Then, faintly, a soft descending call followed by a shallow-sounding tremolo interrupts the silence. "Hear it?" someone whispers. We nod, then listen as an answer comes from across the woods - another call followed by a tremolo.

"I just saw something fly," someone says, trying not to raise his voice in excitement. Someone shines a light in a tree not more than 20 feet away from us and 10 feet above our heads.

A gray phase Eastern Screech Owl peers down at us, immobile, statue-like. Someone shines another light to our left in a tree. Another screech owl. A red phase Eastern Screech Owl. We can hardly believe our luck seeing both color phases together. These tiny owls, measuring only about eight inches long, have glaring yellow eyes, ear tufts, and streaked breasts of gray or red.

They stare at us blankly, unimpressed, then suddenly, without pomp or noise, they fly into the darkness.

Thus begins our winter owl prowls. Such yearly excursions are often taken in the winter months by bird clubs through



Drawing by David Athans.

out Illinois. Owl prowlers often bird before sunrise to sunset in search of these beguiling and mysterious creatures.

Owling can be particularly rewarding before dawn and at dusk when owls are most active. And in winter in certain parts of the state, you can find unusual owls such as the Long-eared, Short-eared, and Snowy Owls which venture south from their summer homes in Minnesota, Canada, and other northern areas to feed and roost in less inclement climes and where food may be more abundant.

It is less inclement for them, but hardly for us, as we have to dress in several layers and wear heavy, warm boots to be prepared for the coldest part of the day just before dawn.

It is at dawn that owls may be completing their hunting and returning to roost in their favored habitat. Although their habitats vary, owls share some unusual characteristics. They have large heads and face masks. Their bills are large and hooked and their long toes have sharp, curved nails used to seize their prey.

NOISELESS FLIGHT

A fringe of hair on the wing feathers gives owls the ability to fly almost completely silently as they swoop to catch their prey. That explains why we could not hear a sound when the screech owls flew away.

Owls also possess specialized eyesight that enables them to see remarkably well at night. Because the eye is fixed in the

skull, owls rotate their heads, sometimes up to 270 degrees.

Owls' ears play an important part in helping them catch a meal at night. In several owl species, the ears are asymmetrical; one is located higher than the other helping the owl to locate its prey by sound. A common misbelief is that the horns on owls such as the Great Horned Owl are their ears. But actually, owls' ears are camouflaged slits located on either side of their heads.

Although some owls are silent, most owls have unusual

'A fringe of hair on the wing feathers gives owls the ability to fly almost completely silently as they swoop to catch their prey.'

ly haunting calls, which are most often produced at mating time. Some, like the Short-eared and Long-eared Owls, sound like wild dogs barking while others produce "Whoop" calls and whistled shrieks.

The Eastern Screech Owl makes one of the eeriest of calls, vocalizing its wide pitch range by sliding notes from top to bottom, then ending with a fast, repeated trembling pitch, shattering the nighttime silence.

Some owls, such as the screech owl, will respond to

calls played by tape. So, too, will the Barred Owl. We hurry to a nearby woods to search for a Barred Owl. Coaxing the Barred Owl with a tape will be difficult after sunrise.

We trek an arduous mile through the woods, playing the tape at intervals along the way near where the bird was spotted a month ago. We stop occasionally to listen, holding our breath and waiting. Just as we are about to give up, we hear it: a resonant, nasal, "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" the trademark call of the Barred Owl.

By this time, a slice of sun is appearing in the sky. We squint our eyes in the distance as someone spots a form in the trees. The Barred Owl is about 20 inches long with dark eyes and dark barring on the upper breast with dark streaking below. But we can only see its silhouette. As we venture farther, it flies farther away. Not wanting to disturb or provoke this magnificent creature, we stop and listen as its calls grow fainter.

THE SEARCH

With the sun now casting its light through the woods, we walk back to our cars. We will search for Long-eared Owls in a nearby conifer stand. At least 12 Long-eared Owls had been observed there at dusk the other day. We walk through the pines, looking for a long slim form sitting on a branch near the tree's trunk about 15 feet high. We comb the place like detectives searching for a miss-



Eastern Screech-Owl. (Eric Walters photo)

ing person, each of us taking a section of the woods and closing in on the pines. We are looking for an owl that has two thin, four-inch tufts appearing at the top of its head and is more slender than the Great Horned Owl.

We search for pellets, regurgitated pieces of bone and fur, which owls can't digest. Finding owl pellets and whitewash is a good sign that owls have been nearby. Someone finds a pellet that looks to be about the right size for a Long-eared Owl. We are excited. We

search for 10 minutes. 15. 20. 30. No sign of Long-eared Owls. An hour gone by, we concede. They're just not here.

Therein lies a good lesson in owl prowling. There's never a guarantee you'll see an owl. We had gotten lucky with the Eastern Screech Owls, even luckier with the Barred Owl. But many owl watchers would agree that prowling for owls is akin to looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

We are disappointed. But we also anticipate a chance to see two other owl species. A nesting pair of Great Horned Owls has been sighted in an oak grove behind a nearby community college. And soon - as dusk approaches - Short-eared Owls will be coming out to begin the hunt in southern Wisconsin.

We arrive at Bong Recreation Area just over the Illinois border at 4:15 p.m. We drive into the park towards an open field area teeming with prairie grasses. We see something fly. We stop our cars and peer out the windows as a Short-eared Owl flies like a huge moth low to the ground, then perches on a post, then undulates back into the field.

Another Short-eared Owl appears, then dive-bombs the other. Still, another swoops swiftly into the ground and out of sight, perhaps picking up a vole that we can't see. Scopes are set up and we get some

good glimpses of the owls as they position themselves on posts, scanning the fields for food.

They are handsome birds, about 15 inches long with boldly streaked breasts and lighter bellies. We can see their long wings with buffy patches and black wrist marks. We watch until the darkness makes it impossible for us to see.

But even as the day fades into night, we continue our search. Our prowl won't end until we find the Great Horned Owl. These magnificent birds with their large, chunky bodies and long tufts mate in January and February. We tiptoe through a frozen field toward the tree where a nest had been sighted. We are careful not to get too close. Nesting owls, especially the Great Horned Owl, do not take kindly to intruders. We squint our eyes to focus on the huge twiggy nest, probably built by a hawk last year.

We scan with our binoculars, chilled by the impending night and also by the thought of seeing the owl. Then, a huge form lifts out of the nest and spreads graceful, giant wings. It flies into the blackness, just as the screech owl had many hours earlier. No doubt, the owl is off on a nighttime hunt. We return home, knowing that while our prowl has finished, another is just beginning. ■

Owl Lore

by Judy De Neal

Fog hangs low over the Saline Bottomland and in the cool early dawn, the cornfields and forests meld creating a dreamy appearance where movement seems slowed. The drone of the car's motor and the dim light dulls my senses. Just before an ear-splitting crash, two enormous brown eyes loom out of the fog and stare into mine.

My reverie is shattered.

A Barred Owl, misjudging its altitude, has connected squarely with my windshield. Shaken, yet unaware of the significance of the encounter, I drive on to work, noting only the lifeless form on the roadside. Owl lore, however, dictates that an encounter with an owl is never an accident. Such an event is pregnant with meaning, although the omen itself is subject to interpretation.

Charles Neely, author of *Tales and Songs of Southern Illinois* recorded this story from Lizzie Toler of Carbondale: "When my first husband died, we lived in the country north of Carterville. While he was sick, a hoot-owl came and lit on the steps of the porch. The hooting aroused my husband, and he said to me, 'That's my call.' I didn't ask any questions. He died."

The hoot-owl referred to was the Great Horned Owl. According to tradition, if the hooting owl calls in the yard of a home, a death will occur in the house. If the bird is some distance from the house, the

death might be that of a friend or a more distant relation.

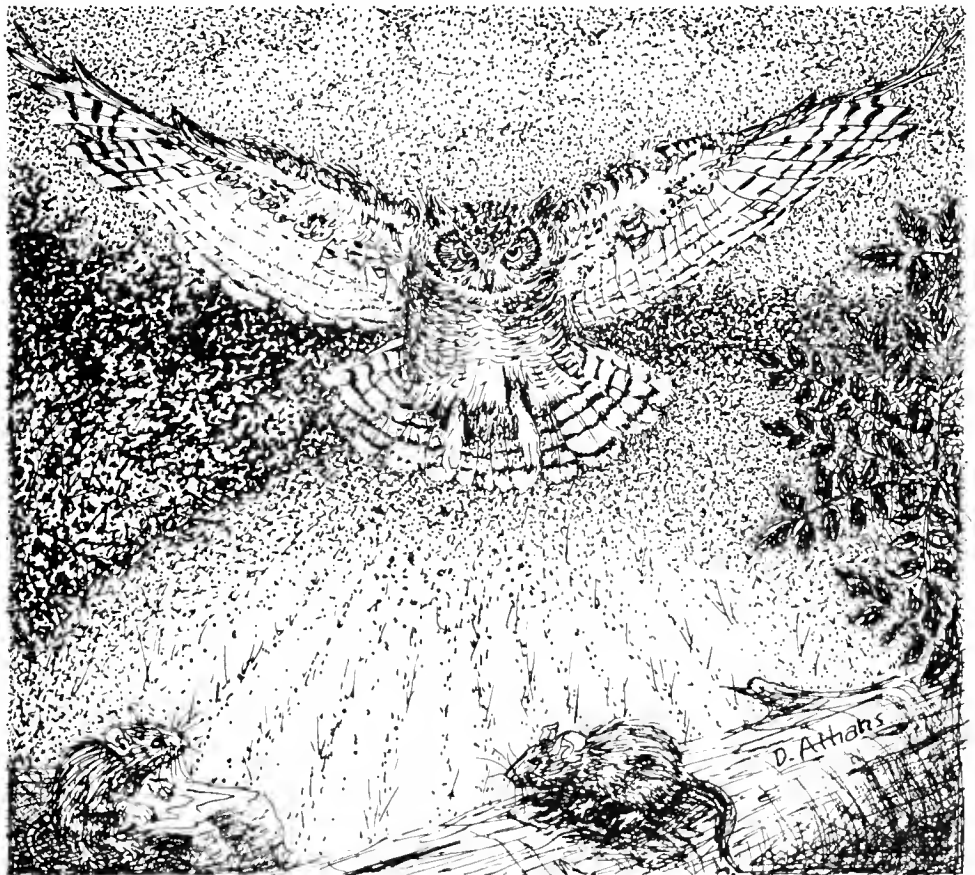
A family might forestall such a tragedy by simply removing the left shoe and turning it upside down or by removing both shoes and setting one cross-wise atop the other, according to John W. Allen in *It Happened in Southern Illinois*. Heating a fireplace shovel in the fire or a hatpin in a kerosene lamp will work, too. Some believed that tying knots in the four corners of a handkerchief would reverse the owl's prophesy.

In southern Illinois, mimicking owl hoots is supposed to bring bad luck. Seminole Indians, however, always whistle back,

because when the owl responds, the whistler knows the hoot is for someone else.

Hooting Great Horned Owls also forecast weather, according to Allen. Daytime hoots in summer predict rain and, if the hoots come from the woods along a creek, the rain will be heavy. In winter, the same hoots foreshadow a cold snap.

Owl lore involves more than hoots. Indeed, owls have been regarded with a mixture of awe and terror through the ages and various superstitions about owls have been passed on for generations in certain cultures. Biblical references consider owls synonymous with desolation (Isaiah 34, 11-15). A



Great Horned Owl drawing by David Athans.

more miserable place could not be imagined than a weed-choked and bramble-covered habitation of dragons where the satyrs cavorted and owls held court.

The ancient Greeks associated owls with Athene, the goddess who sprang full grown from the head of her father Zeus, king of Olympic deities. The owl came to represent Athene, goddess of wisdom and protector of warriors. The battle of Marathon was won because the soldiers believed

'To cure the drunkard, stir owl eggs into his wine each day for three days and he'll give up drinking forever.'

the goddess had flown over them in the form of an owl. Later, generals secretly brought owls to battlefields where they were released to exhort the soldiers.

The Athenian owl lost its positive influence when the Romans conquered Greece. The owl was given the name *Strix*, or witch, and became an object of fear. If an owl wandered into town, elaborate purification ceremonies were performed to remove its influence. A hooting owl foretold the death of Augustus Caesar.

Ancient cultures believed if you want to see well in the

dark, carry the dried eyeball of an owl with you. In England, though, you must eat the eyeball to obtain the desired result.

In Africa, observers recognize that an owl has both a sleepy eye and a wakeful one. Lest you eat the wrong one, place both eyeballs in a bowl of water, noting that one will float - the wakeful eye -and the other will sink. Eat the wakeful eye. Then find a friend who has trouble sleeping and suspend the sleepy eye over his bed; his insomnia will be cured.

To cure the drunkard, stir owl eggs into his wine each day for three days and he'll give up drinking forever. Children who eat owl eggs will never develop a taste for strong drink.

Owls have been nailed to barns in Europe to ward off hailstorms and to prevent lightning strikes. Japanese aborigines carved a wooden model of the Eagle Owl which was displayed in the center of the Ainu village. There it offered protection during times of famine or pestilence.

The Newuk Indians of California believe that a certain bony structure that surrounds the owl's eye is made up of the fingernails of ghosts caught by the bird in its nightly wanderings. In China, it is believed that owls enter homes at night gathering fingernails of the inhabitants they wish to torment on future visits.

Hearing those legends gives me cold shivers, but I try to remember that these stories come from an age of campfires and kerosene lamps. ■



Immature Ivory Gull at Burnham Harbor, Chicago, 2 January 1992. (Joe B. Milosevich photo)

Christmas Day Surprise

by Al Stokie

December 25, 1991 started off like any other Christmas Day. For me, that means driving to Chicago's Montrose Harbor to take part in the annual lakefront Christmas count. Two groups cover the lakefront harbors from opposite directions and supposedly converge at Navy Pier to compare results at mid-day. However, it seems that although both groups are able to find, identify, and count various species of ducks, gulls, and the occasional Snowy Owl or cormorant, neither group can locate the other group at Navy Pier or anywhere else for that matter. This results from the frivolous, non-essential needs of some people to find a place to eat or to locate a bathroom on Christmas Day when most public places are closed. This lack of communication resulted in Joel Greenberg's group being unaware of the one very good species my group found. I am sure they would love to return the favor.

My group consisted of Kanae Hirabayashi, Jeff Sanders, Eric Walters, and me. Kanae regularly birds the Lincoln Park area and is aware of current sightings. She also acts as group photographer mainly because she is the only one smart enough to remember to bring her camera. Jeff and Eric, who have larger county lists than my state list, act as our experts in case we actually find something rare or difficult to identify. After six years on this

count, it seems my only function is to keep the tally sheet and make comments like, "What's that funny looking gull over there?" or "We'd better move on or we'll be late for Christmas dinner."

As we started out, Kanae reminded us that Black Duck, Snowy Owl, Glaucous, Thayer's, and Great Black-backed Gulls had all been seen in the

'After six years on this count, it seems my only function is to keep the tally sheet and make comments like, "What's that funny looking gull over there?" '

area within the last few days. This reminder was a great help to group morale. None of those species could be found and it's always nice to know what you missed by a day or two. In spite of this poor start, Eric soon confirmed his status as expert by finding an adult Thayer's Gull on the harbor ice. Jeff maintained his expert status by agreeing with Eric and I kept my non-expert status by saying I did not see any such Thayer's Gull. After that, we decided to take one last

look at the gulls in the harbor.

Jeff and Eric went directly to view the gulls while Kanae and I walked along the rocks bordering Lake Michigan hoping to add a duck species or two. While walking, we noticed a strange white bird standing on the rocks. "Its head sort of looks like a pigeon," said Kanae. After making some comment about wasting time on pigeons when we were looking for ducks, I noticed that the pigeon-like head had a dirty face. As we got closer, we noticed the bird was all white and was about the size of a Ring-billed Gull. It had various brown and black marks on its back and sides, black marks at the tips of its wings and tail, and best of all, its feet and legs were black.

In short, it was a first-winter Ivory Gull and you don't need an expert to know that. Still, I wondered. I called out to Eric and Jeff, who hurried over and shouted, "It's an Ivory Gull." (One reason I'll never consider myself an expert is that even when I am sure I am right, I am not sure I am right.)

Our group; henceforth, known as the Ivory Gull Gang of Four, viewed the gull through a Kowa scope, took field notes, and congratulated ourselves for being in the right spot at the right time. Kanae took a few photos as I gave Eric all my change so he could call the Chicago hotline at a phone booth. Of course while

Eric was telling Richard Biss all about the gull, the gull decided to lift off, circle the harbor, and disappear over the lake heading northeast.

Eric came back saying that Biss and who knows how many other birders would be here in 30 minutes. I pointed out that the gull was gone and that folks might not be too happy leaving their Christmas dinners for naught. Furthermore, since Eric was the one who called in this information, he would be in even more trouble than the rest of us. The rule is: He who calls in the rare bird gets the most glory if it stays. But he who

calls in the rare bird is also most likely to be lynched if the bird leaves. I admit I'm the one who told Eric to call when I noticed this gull had the look of a wanderer.

So the Ivory Gull Gang of Four continued our count. We added no new gull or duck species after leaving Montrose, but we didn't complain. We didn't want to be too greedy.

Incidentally, the folks who rushed to Montrose Harbor that day never saw the gull. As for the Ivory Gull, it went on to become a celebrity when Richard Biss rediscovered it at Burnham Harbor on the Sunday

after Christmas. Hundreds of people from all over got to see the gull. It even had a feature role in at least two newspaper articles and several short segments on Chicago television stations.

I did not get down to Burnham to see the gull again. Maybe it was just as well since you never know how old friends will act after they become famous. After all, we knew the Ivory Gull when it was just a dirty-faced bird with a "pigeon-like" head sitting on the rocks just outside Montrose Harbor. ■



Immature Ivory Gull at Burnham Harbor, Chicago, 2 January 1992. (Joe B. Milosevich photo)

WINTER IVORY GULL

Third State Record

by Eric Walters

On a windy, frigid Christmas Day last year, I tossed stale bread into Chicago's Montrose Harbor hoping to attract a rare gull. Little did I know that I soon would be seeing the now-famous Ivory Gull, (*Pagophila eburnea*), a bird that made its third recorded appearance in Illinois last winter.

The all-white gull with short black legs and a yellow-tipped black bill made headlines last winter, gracing the front pages of local newspapers as well as suburban televisions during the nightly news. Crazy birders flocked for miles and stood in blowing wind to see the bird, the newspapers reported. "The biggest spectacle out at the harbor wasn't the little white bird who sat innocuously on a floating pier most of the day, but the odd ducks who congregated on the far shore to watch him," wrote Laurie Goering in the *Chicago Tribune*.

But these "odd ducks" knew the Ivory Gull was special. Indeed, the species has been confirmed only twice before in Illinois.

The first sighting (an adult) occurred at the cooling ponds at the north end of Waukegan beach during a Christmas Bird Count 1 January 1949 (Mayfield, 1949). The only other confirmed incidence was of an immature bird at Lake Spring-

field 1 January 1991 (Bohlen, 1991). The 1949 record has been classed as hypothetical in some literature, but a recent interview with the only surviving member from that sighting revealed further details including no pink on the legs, eyes, and bill that verify the identification as an Ivory (Grant,

'The all-white gull with short black legs and a yellow-tipped black bill, made headlines last winter, gracing the front pages of local newspapers as well as suburban televisions during the nightly news.'

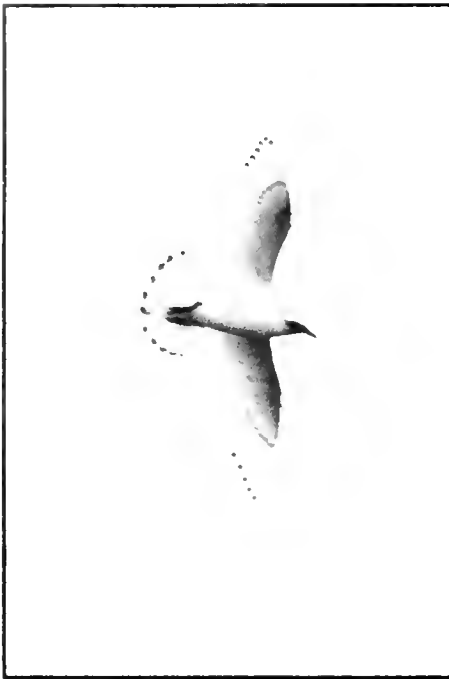
1986). Grant knows of no cases of true albino gulls, but if one occurred it would have pink on the bare parts of its body.

An all-white gull videotaped at Rock Cut State Park mid-November 1989 is under review as a possible albinistic bird, but could be accepted as

an adult Ivory Gull. A report of one seen along the river last January at Goose Lake Prairie State Park wasn't documented and unfortunately must be dismissed.

The Chicago Ivory Gull, first seen 25 December 1991 was an immature plumaged bird. Dark markings splashed on its face made it appear as if it had dipped its head in mud. Light black speckling occurred throughout its wings. Thicker black markings were seen at the end of each wing feather tip and at the end of each tail feather. All the bare parts were dark except for the yellowish bill tip. These markings are typical of a first-winter Ivory Gull (Grant, 1986).

The Chicago bird remained in the vicinity until 2 January 1992. An out-of-town birder observed it flying along the lakefront across from Burnham Harbor 26 December. It was relocated in the harbor 28 December where it stayed for the next five days while hundreds of birders watched and photographed it. The Ivory Gull is a scavenger with a voracious appetite. Dead, small fish thrown out on the ice by fishermen could have enticed the Ivory Gull to stay at Burnham Harbor. Grant states that the bird "is strong and aggressive and often more than a match



Immature Ivory Gull, Burnham Harbor, Chicago, 30 December 1991. (Robert Hughes photo)

for larger gulls." Indeed, I watched as the Ivory Gull won most times when involved in food skirmishes with other gulls. The Ivory Gull also drove other gulls away from its roost spot, preferring to remain

alone. This bird flew as gracefully as a tern and yet as strongly as a falcon.

The Ivory Gull is rarely seen outside of the Arctic (Terres, 1991). The species moves south when the water freezes and seeks areas where ice floes mix with open water (Bent, 1947). Perhaps the Siberian-like weather that froze out Canada and most of the northern tier of the states in early November last winter hastened this Ivory Gull southward to the Great Lakes region. An Ivory Gull seen near Milwaukee one month prior to the Chicago record could have been the same bird.

It is interesting to note that eight records of Ivory Gulls within the last four winters have come from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois (American Birds, 1989, 90, 91, 92). Also, four Ivory Gulls were seen on or near Lake Michigan during the winter

prior to and after the Waukegan sighting in 1949. ■

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BIRD FINDING GUIDE

Saw-Whet Owls in Allerton Park

by Robert Chapel

On a cool, cloudy mid-January morning in 1988, I hiked through Lost Garden at the south side of Allerton Park, four miles west of Monticello in central Illinois. Roaming through a cluster of small red cedars, I recalled having seen a Northern Saw-whet Owl, (*Aegolius acadicus*), in a similar

habitat in Indiana.

I wondered. Was it possible that I could find the seven-inch tall, yellow-eyed owl here in central Illinois?

Then I noticed whitewash and small owl pellets. Excited, I began an intense search for the owl. For many minutes, I scanned the evergreens, bend-

ing low and peering into spots where the owl might be roosting, but with no luck.

Then as I stood up, I found myself staring straight into the eyes of a Saw-whet Owl five feet above my head.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is one of the most sought-after birds in Illinois, where it is

primarily a winter resident. Its relative scarcity, small size, and propensity to roost in dense vegetation makes it a difficult bird to locate. And unlike the more common Eastern Screech Owl, the saw-whet is rarely heard on its wintering grounds. Nevertheless, with practice, birders can often locate the saw-whet at favored roost sites during winter in Allerton Park.

Since 1988, Allerton Park, a 1,500-acre hardwood forested area owned by the University of Illinois, has been considered one of the best places to find Saw-whet Owls in Illinois.

Extensive evergreen plantings throughout the park provide excellent roost sites for Saw-whet Owls. They can sometimes also be found in vine tangles or dense shrubs. Younger evergreens, within a mixture of more mature forest and dense thorny thickets, provide the most preferred roosts at Allerton.

Area birders are usually most successful in locating the owls from mid-January, after a sufficient amount of whitewash and pellets has been deposited, to mid-March, when the owls begin migrating north.

Saw-whet Owls have most often been found in the Lost Garden area on the south side of the Sangamon River, which bisects the park (see map on following page). In 1991/92, three Saw-whet Owls were found here.

Lost Garden is an abandoned formal garden site, with a double row of large cedars. To either side of the double row, there are clumps of scattered young cedars, fifteen to twenty feet tall, standing in dense thickets of multi-flora rose,



D. KANIA

Since 1988, Allerton Park has been considered one of the best places to find Northern Saw-whet Owls in Illinois. Drawing by Denis Kania.

native roses, honeysuckle, and deciduous saplings, with scattered mature trees. The Saw-whet Owls are usually found in these small cedars, typically at heights of six to fifteen feet.

Two other locations where Saw-whets have been found are on the north side of the Sangamon River. From 1988 to 1990, at least one bird was found near the Sun Singer statue at the extreme west end of the main park drive in a dense thicket of pines, cedars, deciduous trees, and thorny plants. On one occasion, the bird was seen roosting in a tangle of vines around a plum tree nearby. The birds were not seen here in 1991 or 1992, although birders did find whitewash, pellets, and a single feather at that location this year.

Last year, a single bird was

found in some formally planted arbor vitae adjacent to the visitor's center. This bird remained faithful to a few perches and was easily found. Apparently, formally planted areas are just as suitable as long as there is the requisite amount of food, especially mice.

To find the owls, carefully scan all trees for tell-tale whitewash. Saw-whet Owl whitewash is smooth and tends to be an ivory, rather than chalky-white color. Next, carefully examine the ground for pellets. Saw-whet pellets are about an inch in length and tend to have a smooth surface.

When you find the whitewash and pellets, look in the immediate area for the owls. They often sit directly above the whitewash and pellets, although they periodically change their roost sites.

On sunny days, the owls will sit well out on small branches, relying on their plumage for camouflage. They can look much like a clump of dead oak leaves resting in the conifers.

Sometimes they will sit tightly against the trunk of the roost tree. Look for a bird that may appear from slightly to considerably smaller than a screech owl. A bird with compressed feathers may appear almost too small for your expectations, while a bird that is fluffed out may appear larger than expected. Size may vary from that of a tennis ball to that of a softball.

With patience and careful scrutiny, you can usually find the birds within an hour. With practice, you may find them more quickly. A few birds, however, will defy all efforts to find them, making the search

for Saw-whet Owls a challenge to all birders, whether beginner or advanced.

While looking for the owls during winter at Allerton Park, you may also want to enjoy the other resident bird life. Birds

'They can look much like a clump of dead oak leaves resting in the conifers.'

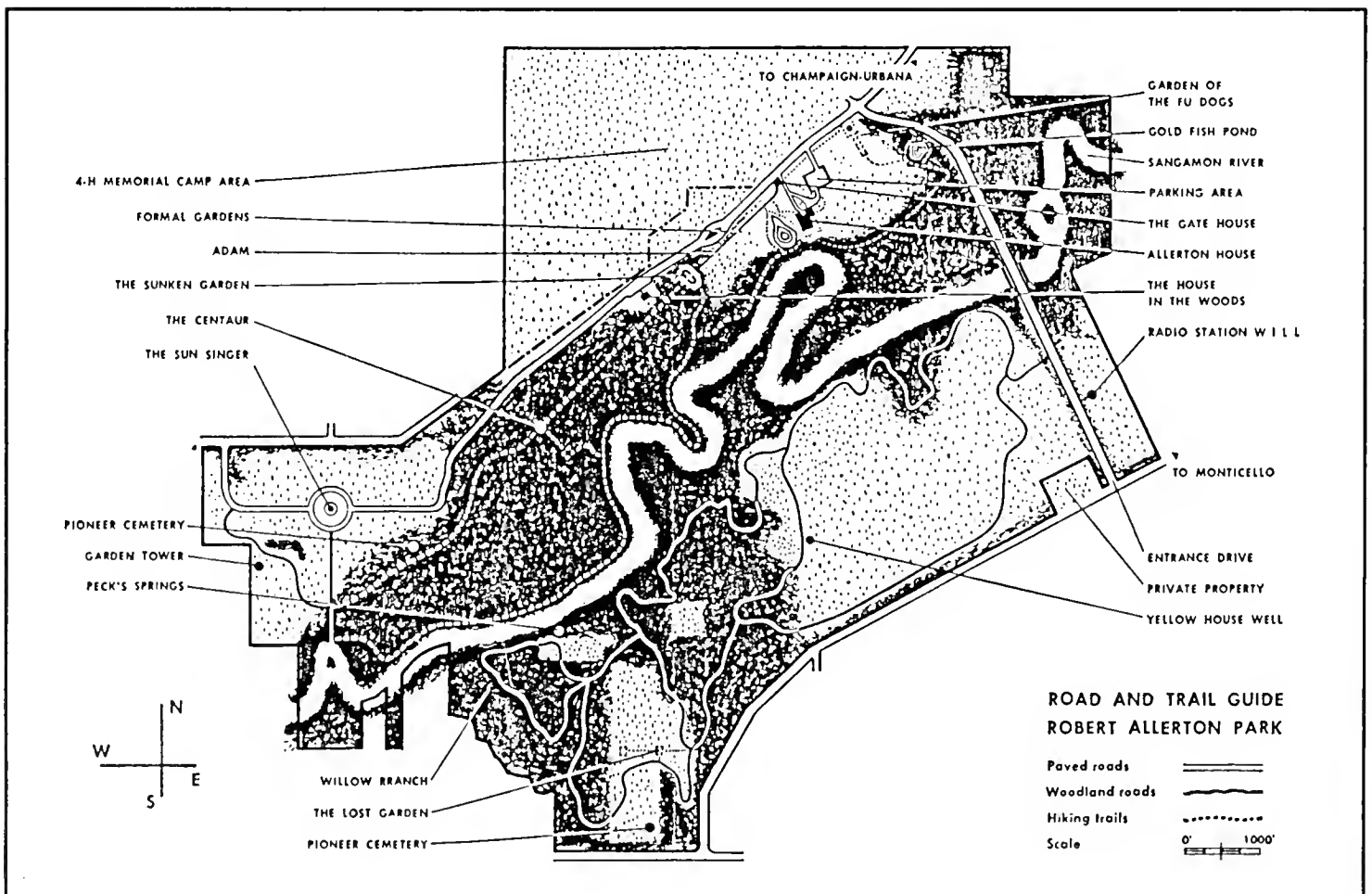
you may find include Barred and Great Horned Owls, a resident pair of Red-shouldered Hawks and Pileated Woodpeckers. Also, the numerous conifers near Allerton House and the visitor's center provide food

for Pine Siskins, Red and White-winged Crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks.

If you're lucky, your visit to Allerton Park will reward you with the *piece de resistance*, a tiny northern owl that visits our prairie state in winter. ■

Editor's Note: Robert Chapel will lead IOS members on a Saw-whet Owl finding excursion on Feb. 13, 1993. For more information and to register, call Sue Friscia, IOS field trip chairman at (708) 371-2124.

Robert cautions that you should wear protective clothing, even if the weather is mild. The owls' roosting area contains thorny plants and sharp needles. A pair of coveralls serves nicely as a good suit of armor.



FEEDER STATION

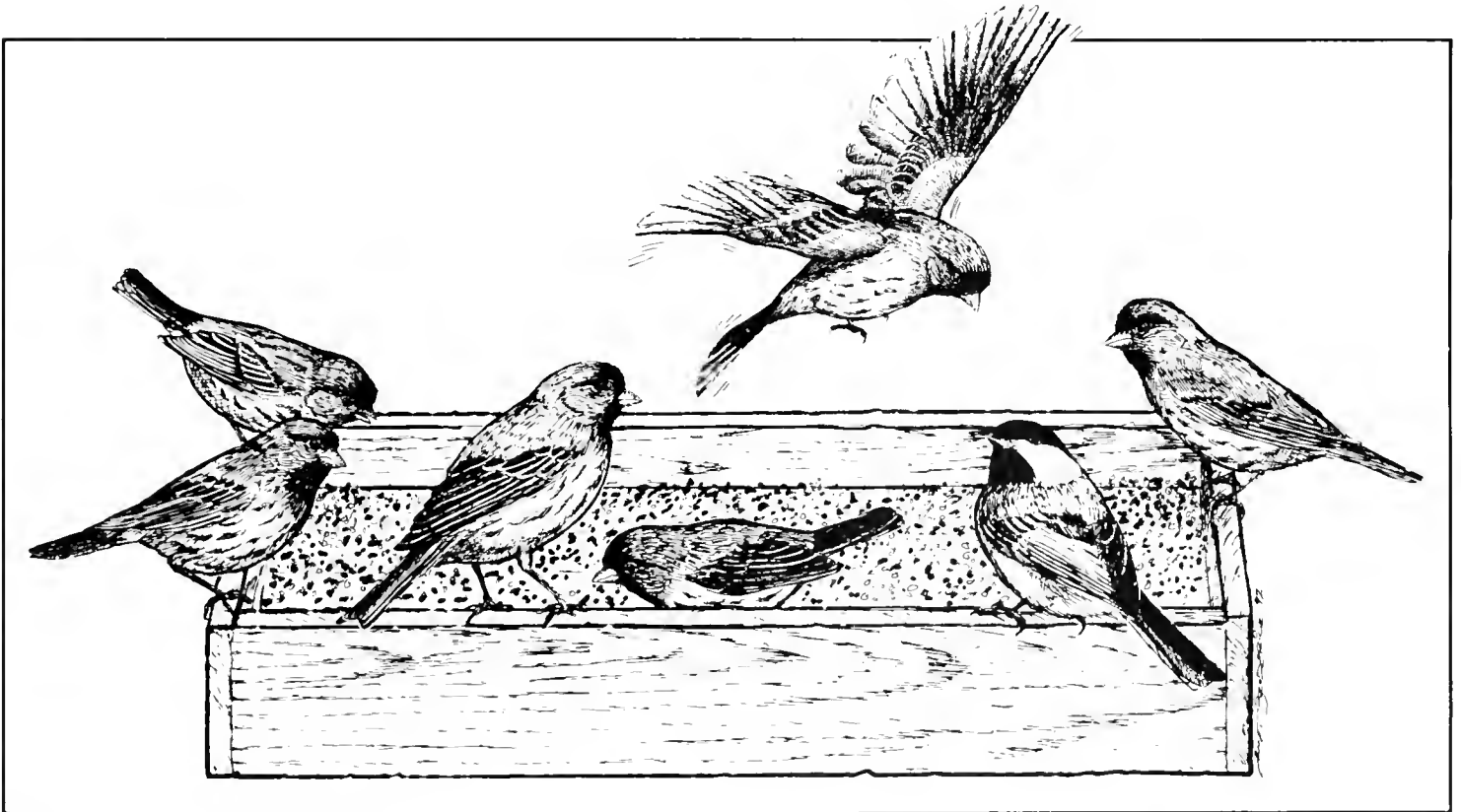
by Sue Friscia

Diary of a Mini-Blind Peeper

I love gadgets, especially when it comes to back yard bird feeding. My latest acquisition is a mini-blind, not something you would expect to find in a bird seed aisle.

I view my yard from a picture window in the basement. The blind helps me keep only a small portion of the window exposed. On a sunny day, I can close the blind completely and tilt the slats at just the right angle for perfect glare-free viewing. The blind also keeps birds from flying into the window.

I placed a piece of pine shelving on the window ledge a few inches off the ground. The birds hop right up to the window to feed. As long as I don't make any sudden moves they continue to scarf down the seeds. What follows is a diary of birds I viewed through my mini-blind last winter.



Drawing by Emmet Broderick.

December 1 - A male Purple Finch hops on the window platform. He sure likes oilers. While he's cracking one open, I notice his feathers look spiked. I look forward to seeking this purple punk rocker again.

December 6 - My cardinal population is exploding.

Tonight, I count seven males and six females dining at dusk. Have you ever noticed that the female has a red eye brow?

December 11 - The Mourning Doves sit on the wires just inches apart and take turns coming into the feeders. It's hard to believe that 122 doves can all fit on the wires, but

somehow they do. Doves eat between 50 to 100 pebbles a day to help them grind up the seed they eat. They also eat a large portion of the 80 to 120 pounds of feed I fill at eight different feeders each week.

January 19 - During the day, I never see more than a few cardinals at the feeders, but in

the evening when all the House Sparrows and doves have left, the cardinals return. I see two or three at almost every feeder, 21 in all.

January 27 - A male Red-winged Blackbird is at the feeder. He's a month ahead of schedule. I didn't expect to see him until the end of February.

February 3 - I never brought in my bluebird house. I thought it might be a welcome spot on a cold, windy day. A male House Sparrow guards the entrance, swinging another male sparrow by his head feathers for several minutes before he lets him go. They fight for possession until I have to leave for work.

February 9 - Two White-crowned Sparrows love the platform feeder. First, the im-

*'Mourning doves
eat between fifty to
one-hundred pebbles
a day to help them
grind up the seed
they eat.'*

mature hops up and looks me over and then the adult takes a peek. You can always tell them

from the House Sparrows by the way they forage. They kick and shuffle in Fox Sparrow and towhee fashion.

February 20 - In the morning while filling the feeders, I hear White-crowned Sparrows, House Finches, and Red-winged Blackbirds singing. It is enough to give me spring fever. ■

Sue Friscia, Field Trip Chairman of the Illinois Ornithological Society, welcomes your comments on feeding birds. You can write her at: 3417 West 123rd Street, Alsip, IL 60658.

AVIAN ANNALS

by Eric Walters

70 years ago:

The first European Starlings ever reported in Illinois were noted at Urbana during the months of January and February. The starling flock, which consisted of seven to eight individuals, was seen several times in a roost with cowbirds and grackles.

60 years ago:

A few European Starlings wintering near Barrington were considered a rare find.

Four field trips to Horseshoe Lake during late December and early January failed to yield any blackbirds, starlings, or House Sparrows.

A Mount Carroll resident wrote "about our

buildings there are several pairs of starlings, but they are very shy and you have to look sharp to see them".

30 years ago:

The most abundant species counted on Illinois' Christmas Bird Count was the European Starling.

1 year ago:

The European Starling was seen on 90 per cent of Illinois' Christmas Bird Counts and was the second most common species, only surpassed by the Canada Goose.

Participants logged 126,484 European Starlings throughout the state during the count. ■

TEST YOUR SKILLS:

Is it a Chipping or a Clay-colored Sparrow?

by David B. Johnson

Readers will recall field identification tips and illustrations for the juvenile and basic (winter) Chipping and Clay-colored Sparrows in the last two issues of *Meadowlark*. Now test your knowledge. Examine the photographs of museum skins below taken at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Which is Chipping and which is Clay-colored? (*correct answers appear at the bottom of page 120*)

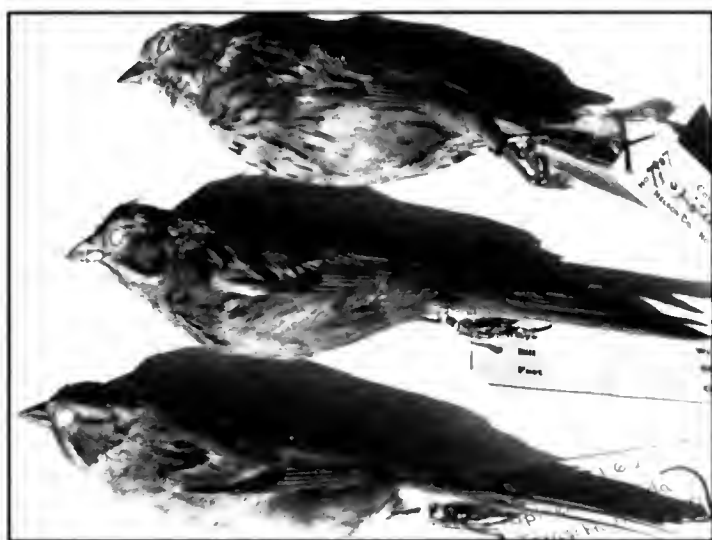


Figure 1.

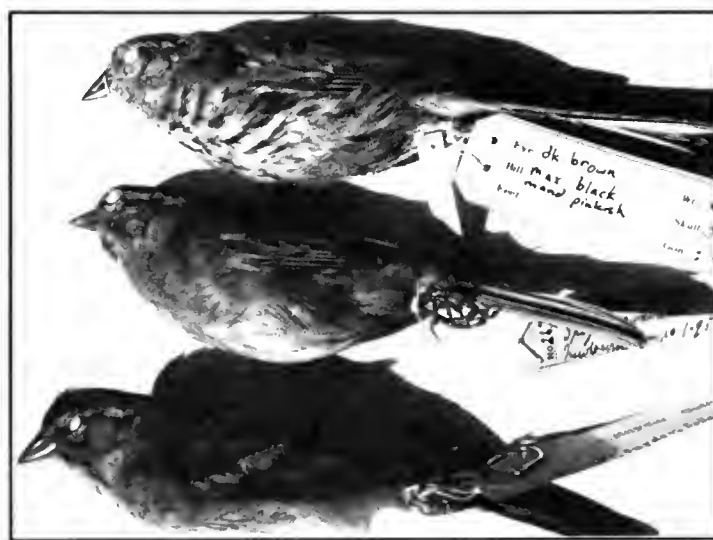


Figure 2.

(David B. Johnson photos)

As you may have guessed, what is strikingly different about the two species is that, in both the juvenile and basic plumages, the Clay-colored Sparrow has bright buffy and white overtones. The Chipping Sparrow has an overall gray coloration.

The basic Chipping Sparrow tends to have a reddish brown color in the back, crown, and face. The Clay-colored has white to buffy overtones, particularly in the face.

The Clay-colored also has buffy lores and no eyeline, giving it a pale-lored appearance. In a juvenile, the malar area is buffy to white. Also, the three-cornered ear patch of the Clay-colored Sparrow in both shown plumages is darker etched at its borders than it is in the Chipping Sparrow in both plumages.

The Clay-colored Sparrow, in both juvenile and basic plumages, has a gray nape, which is nearly absent on the juvenile chippie. In the basic chippie, the gray nape blends in with the gray sides of its head, neck, and upper breast. The basic Clay-colored Sparrow has its neck set off by a buffy upper breast and white malar area.

I would like to thank Dr. David Willard of the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History for permission to examine Chipping and Clay-colored Sparrow museum tray skins. ■

- 54 Crown Point Dr. Buffalo Grove, IL 60089.

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Warm Winter Attracts Rare Species To Evanston/Wilmette Lakefront

The winter of 1991/92 was one of the warmest on record for northeastern Illinois as reported by the *Chicago Tribune*. The unusual warmth may have accounted for some unusual sightings in this area last winter season.

A late Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) was attracted to my bread-throwing at Wilmette's Gillson Park 20 December 1991. Also discovered was a wintering immature white phase Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) that fed on the exposed grass in the park and nearby golf course. A Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) never before recorded in winter in this area was located near the Evanston Arts Center pier 4 January 1992.

A flock of more than one-hundred Oldsquaw (*Clangula hyemalis*) would be an unusual winter find in this area, but large numbers were regularly recorded last season. More than eight-hundred were seen along Evanston's lakefront on 5 January 1992, the largest Illinois winter concentration reported in twenty-five years.

Most unusual was the pair of Surf Scoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*) present near Gillson Park from 25 December 1991 and seen at various places through 14 January 1992 as far south as the Evanston/Chicago boundary. Also, two White-winged Scoters (*Melanitta fusca*) were seen flying north from Evanston's Northwestern Landfill on 2 January 1992. A single Black Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) was found on 7 January 1992 along the Evanston/Chicago border.

- Eric Walters, 720 Reba Place, Evanston, IL 60202.

Merlin Winters Near Morton Arboretum

The dawn of 15 December 1991 was foggy at Hidden Lake Forest Preserve when I noticed a small falcon perched on a dead snag overhanging

a nearby river. The bird flew directly over me where I could see dark underwings, a dark streaked chest, and a dark tail with thin pale bands. I easily detected the blue-gray back indicating this was an adult male Merlin (*Falco columbarius*).

The bird, probably hunting the river area, flew into a nearby residential subdivision known for its bird feeders. Later that day, it returned to its perch in the same dead tree.

On 19 February, 1992, an adult male Merlin was seen again approximately one mile west of the preserve on the northwest boundary of the Morton Arboretum. With only six winter records published for the Merlin in northeastern Illinois, both sightings probably represent the same bird.

- Eric Walters, 720 Reba Place, Evanston, IL 60202.

Winter Franklin's Gull Visits Rock Island

On 12 January 1992, while leading a field trip of Quad-City Audubon Society members, I located an alternate (breeding) plumaged adult Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) on the frozen harbor of Sunset Park in Rock Island. The harbor is part of the Mississippi back waters.

The bird associated with approximately 400 Ring-billed and 300 Herring Gulls as well as two Iceland and one Great Black-backed Gull. Although weather conditions were poor with light rain and overcast skies, we easily identified this bird. I and other observers including Ann Barker and Leroy Sowl noticed the bird's black head, partial white eye-ring, and medium gray mantle.

Black wing tips were separated from the mantle by a white band. We also noticed the wide white trailing wing edge as well as the bird's red legs and bill. The bird was significantly smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls standing with it on the ice.

Finding an alternate plumaged Franklin's Gull in January is rare, but I have seen a similarly-plum-

aged bird on the Mississippi River here on 28 February which even had a pink cast to its belly.

- Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 53803.

Mew Gulls Observed at Lakefront

During the winter of 1991/92, I was fortunate enough to see Mew Gulls (*Larus canus*) four different times along the Chicago lakefront. The first was seen on 15 December 1991 at the north end of Diversey Harbor. The second and third sightings were on 15 January 1992 at Montrose and Diversey harbors. I saw the fourth Mew Gull on 20 February 1992 at Burnham Harbor.

All of these birds were adults in basic plumage and all were associating with Ring-billed Gulls. Unfortunately, no one else saw any of these birds, but I did manage to photograph the second and fourth individuals.

Mew Gulls, especially adults in basic (winter) plumage are readily identifiable, being obviously darker mantled than any Ring-billed Gull. Additionally, the head and neck are heavily mottled and streaked, giving these birds a hooded appearance.

- Robert Hughes, 696 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60613.

Editor's Note: These sightings represent Illinois' fifth through eighth records of this species.

California Gull Visits Chicago

On 2 December 1991, I found an adult California Gull (*Larus californicus*) at O'Brien Lock and Dam in southeastern Chicago. The bird was standing in a grassy area with a mixed flock of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, adjacent to a garbage dump. The gull was seen again the following day in the same area by Eric Walters, Walter Marcisz, and Sue Friscia.

About halfway in size between Ring-billed and Herring Gull, this individual had a gray mantle several shades darker than either of the aforementioned species. The bird showed dull yellow legs, dark eyes, and a fairly long bill with the

telltale black and red spot on the gonys.

- Robert Hughes, 696 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60613.

Editor's Note: This sighting represents the first verified winter record for northern Illinois and only the second winter record for the state. Interestingly, another adult California Gull was discovered during this period in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the first confirmed record for the state.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Winters in Moline

On 2 February 1992, I saw an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) along the Illinois side of the Mississippi River channel from Butterworth Parkway in Moline. I observed the bird for five minutes with Ann Johnson of Norwalk, Iowa. Later that day, Gerald White of Muscatine, Iowa also saw the bird.

With full sunlight behind us, we used a scope at 35 x 60 to observe the bird standing on an ice flow about 400 meters away. The bird associated with many larger Herring Gulls and an adult Great Black-backed Gull. The mantle was not as dark as the Great Black-backed Gulls, and the legs were yellow.

A second year bird was seen at Davenport 5 January 1992 by Jim Fuller of Iowa City. I had seen an adult 11 January 1992, which was later seen 8 February by others.

We also saw two Great Black-backed Gulls from 8 January to 13 February and three or four Iceland Gulls from 31 December to 21 February. Many observers sighted Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls all winter long in the Quad-City area.

During mild winters, with only partial ice cover, this area is rich with gulls.

- Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803.

Slaty-backed Gull Seen Near Rock Island Arsenal

At mid-morning on 6 February 1992, I saw about 100 gulls on an ice shelf at the Lindsay Park Boat Club near my home in east Davenport,

Iowa. One Herring Gull-sized, dark-mantled bird reminded me of a Lesser Black-backed Gull, several of which had been seen during the winter season.

When seen through a scope, it was clearly not a Lesser Black-backed Gull as the legs were bright pink, not yellow. It was also too small for a Great Black-backed Gull and lacked the totally black mantle. I was left with a choice between Slaty-backed (*Larus schistisagus*) and Western Gull.

I flushed the bird noting the wide white trailing edge on the wing extending toward the leading edge just behind the wing tip. That eliminated Western Gull.

The Slaty-backed Gull's head was white and smudged with tan behind the light eye. Its bill was yellow with some red near the tip of the lower mandible. The most distal two primaries had white mirrors. I also noticed a white comma on the back.

I observed the bird for 10 minutes using binoculars and scope. Then the bird flew across the Mississippi River toward the Rock Island Arsenal.

Slaty-backed Gull was recorded here 14 - 25 February 1989 and once at Alton during the winter of 1983/84.

- Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport, Iowa 52803.

Editor's note: For detailed field identification notes and an excellent report of the "First North American occurrence of Slaty-backed Gull (in Illinois and Missouri) away from the Pacific Ocean" see (Goetz, Rudden, Snetsinger, 1986) American Birds 40:207-216. Also see "A Slaty-backed Gull at St. Louis", Ill. Audubon Bull. No. 209:26-30, 1984. If accepted by IORC, Petersen's sighting would represent the third state record. Observers are encouraged to carefully examine all dark-mantled gulls in Illinois.

Varied Thrush Winters in Springfield

On 27 December 1991 I was searching for tardy or stray birds at the Adams Sanctuary on the east side of Springfield. It was mild with temperatures in the 40s and if it hadn't been for the early November record low temperatures and snow, more passerines would have been present.

This sheltered area, an island of woods inside

the city, featured a bird feeder below which I noticed an American Robin. As I was thinking, "Now, why couldn't that be a Varied Thrush?" I heard a noise behind me. I turned to see another robin-sized bird midway up a hackberry tree. This bird had a large orange eyeline, dark crown and cheek patch, and a brighter orange thrush-like throat.

I knew immediately it was a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) and I savored the find as long as I could. This bird was a female because of its dull chest band and fairly dull orange coloration. I noticed dapple gray on the flanks and the dark, blue-gray back and tail as well as the obvious orange on the wings. A Red-tailed Hawk flew over. The thrush gave its nasal whistle note and escaped my view.

I tried several times the rest of the winter to find the Varied Thrush, but without success. I was sure I heard its call 24 January 1992, again when a Red-tailed Hawk flew over.

I had finally conceded that this bird had migrated or perished when on 6 April 1992, I spotted it among several robins on the northeast side of Adams Sanctuary. Although I'm fairly sure this was the same female, it had changed considerably. The plumage was worn, the eyeline was whitish buff, and the throat was duller orange. The back, tail, and crown were brownish. The orange on the wing was still noticeable, but the breast band looked faint.

It may seem unusual that this species breeds and migrates in a worn plumage, but the Varied Thrush does not go through a pre-alternate molt, according to Pyle et al. in *Identification Guide to North American Passerines* (1987).

Two days later Vernon Kleen saw this thrush in the same place. This bird must have wintered locally and went undetected, since, like most Old World (*Zoothera*) thrushes it can be secretive.

- H. David Bohlen, 1920 S. 10 1/2 St. Springfield, IL 62703.

Editor's Note: Forty Illinois records of Varied Thrush exist. While this species is a rare winter resident, it has occurred almost annually the past twenty years. (Bohlen, 1989).

Chipping Sparrow Lingers in Southern Illinois

Winter 1991/92 was unusually mild causing a number of migrants to linger in southern Illinois.



Varied Thrush at Adams Sanctuary, Springfield, winter 1991-92. Drawing by Diane Johnson.

On 10 January 1992, a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) followed the American Tree, White-throated and Field Sparrows to my feeders. Among these winter regulars, the chippie stood out with its rufous crown, gray neck, and rump. Todd Fink certified my identification. The Chipping Sparrow came almost daily to the ground feeding stations to eat cracked corn until it got lost among the early spring migrants in March.

- Judy De Neal, 4240 Highway 34 South, Harrisburg, IL 62946.

Yellow-headed Blackbird Arrives Early in Southern Illinois

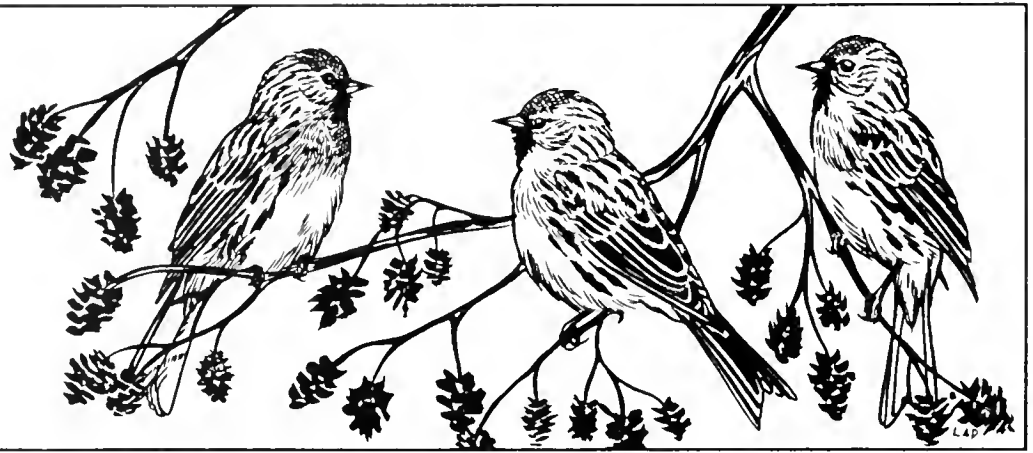
Almost as soon as a flock of blackbirds arrives in southern Illinois, Todd Fink and I begin search

ing for Yellow-headed Blackbirds. In January 1992, we had a few days of frigid temperatures, followed by somewhat milder weather. In the agricultural fields along the Mississippi, we found a huge flock of blackbirds foraging in the waste grain. In the flock were Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Rusty Blackbirds.

Todd spotted a male Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) with golden head and chest shining in the sunlight. It's difficult to direct other birds to see a particular individual, but with a lot of verbal coaching and after the birds settled in the treetops, a group of us all got good looks. Some of us even noticed the white wing stripe of the yellowhead when in flight.

- Judy De Neal, 4240 Highway 34 South, Harrisburg, IL 62946.

Field Notes



1991-92 WINTER SEASON

by Robert F. Danley

The 1991/92 winter field notes submitted contained an impressive spectrum of species and, at times, large numbers.

Both December and January began with sub-zero temperatures in the north, but ended statewide with monthly averages above normal. December was four to five degrees Fahrenheit above normal. January was six to eight degrees Fahrenheit above normal.

Record highs were recorded in February, which averaged seven to eight degrees above normal. Snow was recorded in all three months. December had the heaviest accumulations (three to fourteen inches) while February and January followed with one to eleven inches and one to nine inches, respectively. Total precipitation was below normal for each month statewide.

With monthly average temperatures above normal, open water conditions provided for good sightings of waterbirds throughout the season. Thirty-one species of waterfowl were observed including all three scoter species as well as large numbers of Oldsquaw and Greater Scaup.

Gulls, the mainstay of many a winter field trip, were the highlights of the season at traditional spots. A whopping fifteen species were observed including the first winter Ivory Gull in Chicago. Incredibly, three other vagrant species were recorded: Slaty-backed Gull (third state record), Mew Gull (fifth through eighth state records), and California Gull.

Species detected past their usual departure times include: Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, three Virginia Rails, Sora, Red Phalarope, Sanderlings (probable), Eastern Phoebe, Marsh Wren, Northern Waterthrush, Chipping

and Lincoln's Sparrows, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

This was a flight year for Snowy Owls (second largest on record) and Common Redpolls. Other finches were absent or low in numbers. Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harrier were scarce. Berry-eating species appeared scarce while the acorn eaters were noted in larger than average numbers. A Varied Thrush, a rare winter resident, was seen in Springfield.

A few observers forwarded notes with an undertone of "where were the birds?". Perhaps the mild weather prevented better concentrations, especially of passerines which were considered scarce.

This seasonal report contains the most significant observational records during the winter season statewide. Some records are not included here because they may be considered either late fall or early spring migrants. These will appear in the appropriate seasonal reports.

Many thanks to the many contributors who are acknowledged in an initialized format after the corresponding field record and collectively in the following list: Douglas Anderson, Steve Bailey, David Bohlen, Laurence Binford, Richard Biss, Toby Brown, Elizabeth Chato, Karin Cassel, Robert Chapel, Roger Coons (RCo), Bob Danley, Judy DeNeal, Jeff Donaldson (JDo), Myrna Deaton, Mark Donohue (MDo), Mary Jane Easterday, Sue Friscia, Todd Fink, Brad Grover, Scott Garrow, Jeff Hardt (JHa), Kanae Hirabayashi, Michael Hogg, Robert Hughes, David Johnson, Dennis Jones (DJo), Peter Kasper, Dan Kassebaum (DKa), Vernon Kleen, James Landing, Kevin Lubey, David Mandell, Walter Marcisz, Joe Milosevich, Jim Neal, Richard Palmer, Peter Peterson, John Purcell (JPu), Doug

FIELD NOTES HEADING:

Winter 1991-92 was a flight year for Common Redpolls. Drawing by Leslie A. DeCoursey.

Robinson, Arlo Raim, Harriet Rylaarsdam, Richard Sandburg (RSa), Wes Serafin, Darrell Shambaugh (DSh), Jim Smith, Jim Solum (JSo), Alan Stokie, Jack Van Benthuyzen, Cynthia Watkins (CWa), Allan Welby and Eric Walters.

As a printing aide, the following abbreviations have been used throughout this report:

- ad. = adult
- subad. = subadult
- imm. = immature
- yg. = young
- pr. = pair
- * = documented record
- ** = specimen record
- resp. = respectively
- m.ob. = many observers
- est. = estimate
- Co = County
- L = Lake
- C.A. = Conservation Area
- F.P. = Forest Preserve
- F.W.A. = Fish & Wildlife Area
- N.W.R. = National Wildlife Refuge
- N.C. = Nature Center
- N.P. = Nature Preserve
- S.P. = State Park
- S.F. = State Forest
- et al. = other observers present
- EA: = Early arrival
- MC: = Maximum count
- LD: = Late date

- Bald.L = Baldwin Lake (St. Clair & Randolph Co)
- Carl.L = Carlyle Lake (Clinton Co)
- CBG = Chicago Botanic Gardens
- Carb = Carbondale (Jackson Co)
- Chi = Chicago's lakefront parks--excluding JP & LCal (Cook Co)
- Clin.L = Clinton Lake (De Witt Co)
- COLSP = Chain O' Lakes S.P. (Lake Co)
- CONWR = Crab Orchard N.W.R. (Williamson Co)
- Fermi = Fermilab at Batavia (Du Page Co)
- FGP = Forest Glen Preserve (Vermilion Co)
- GLPSP = Goose Lake Prairie S.P. (Grundy Co)
- GLNTC = Great Lakes Naval Training Center (Lake Co)
- HL = Horseshoe Lake (Madison Co)
- HLCA = Horseshoe Lake C.A. (Alexander Co)
- IBSP = Illinois Beach S.P. (Lake Co)
- JP = Chicago's Jackson Park (Cook Co)
- KCP = Kennekuk Cove Park (Vermilion Co)
- KFWA = Kaskaskia F.W.A. (Moultrie Co)
- LCal = Lake Calumet (Cook Co)
- LCNP = La Salle County Nuclear Plant (La Salle Co)
- LRen = Lake Renwick (Will Co)

- LRSHNC = Little Red School House N.C. (Cook Co)
- LVerM = Lake Vermilion (Vermilion Co)
- M.Arb = Morton Arboretum (Du Page Co)
- MFWA = Middle Fork F.W.A. (Vermilion Co)
- MM = McKee Marsh (Du Page Co)
- RLCA = Rice Lake C.A. (Fulton Co)
- SLSP = Sangchris Lake S.P. (Sangamon & Christian Co)
- Spfd = Springfield (Sangamon Co)
- SLCA = Spring Lake C.A. (Tazewell Co)
- SRSF = Sand Ridge S.F. (Mason Co)
- SRSP = Starved Rock S.P. (La Salle Co)
- UCCA = Union County C.A. (Union Co)
- Wauk = Waukegan (Lake Co)

A number in parentheses () indicates the number of birds observed at a particular location or date. No number signifies single birds. Capitalized, underlined, and bolded sightings refer to occurrences of note.

1991-92 WINTER DATA:

PACIFIC LOON

Rend L, 27 Dec. (*TF, DR). First IL winter record

Common Loon

L Harrisburg (Saline Co), 9 Jan. (JD); Rend L, 17 Jan. (TF).

Pied-billed Grebe

MC: 21, Bald.L, 20 Jan. (RP); 18, Spfd, 16 Jan. (DB). Others: Rend L (5), 1 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa); Saline Co (7), 19 Jan. (TF); Heidecke F.W.A. (Grundy Co), 17 Jan.--21 Feb. (JM); 22 Jan. (2) & 3 Feb. (3), Braidwood (JM).

Horned Grebe

MC: 61, Bald.L, 21 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa). Others: Chi, 15-22 Dec. (JPu, m.ob.); Braidwood, 23 Dec. (JM - photo); Kenilworth (Cook Co), 4-7 Jan. (LB, EW).

Eared Grebe

Spfd wintered, (DB); Bald.L (2), 20 Jan.-28 Feb. (MD, RP, DKa)

Double-crested Cormorant

GLNTC (2), 1 Jan. (LB); Chi, 4 Jan. (m.ob.); Evanston, 5 Jan. (RB); Clin.L, 5 Jan. (RP); Rend L, 17 Jan. (TF); Carl.L (1-5), wintered (DKa); Braidwood (2-3), all winter (JM). At least 3 L Michigan records in Dec.

Great Blue Heron

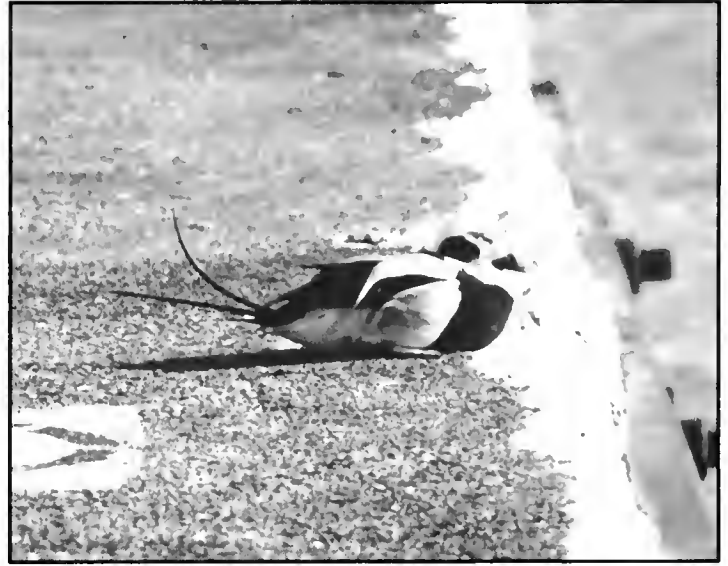
Vermilion Co (5), 1 Jan. (SB); Clin. L, 19 Jan. (RC); Winnebago Co (4), wintered (BG).

Black-crowned Night-Heron

MC: 7, Skokie, 21 Dec. (EW); 1-5, Whistler Woods,



Immature Tundra Swan (with Mute Swans) at Wolf Lake (Wm. W. Powers Conservation Area), Chicago (Cook Co.), 4 February 1992. Photo by Walter Marcisz.



Oldsquaw at Montrose Harbor, Chicago (Cook Co.), 17 December 1991. Photo by Robert Hughes.

Riverdale (Cook Co), 1 Dec.-16 Feb. (*WM) but 6 there on 6 Feb. (SF). Others: Fermi (2--1st winter), all winter (PK, SG, m.ob.); JP, 27 Dec. (DA); Lisle, 5 Jan. (fide RCo).

Tundra Swan

L Ren. (3), 1 Dec. (JM); UCCA (4--3 ad & 1 imm.), 18 Dec. (VK et al.); Clin.L (2), 6 Jan. (RP); Clin.L (4), 1 Feb. (MD, RP); L Mermet (Massac Co) (5), 6 Feb. (TF); Wolf Lake (imm.), 3-16 Feb. (WM); Saline Co (2 imm.), all winter (JD).

Mute Swan

MC: 29, Wolf L, 4-9 Feb. (WM). Others: Rock River (Winnebago Co) (one wintered) (JDo) - fifth consecutive year; Spfd (7), 5 Dec. (DB); LCal (6), 11 Jan. (MD, RP).

Trumpeter Swan

Philo (Champaign Co) (3), 9 Dec. (SB--photo); Clin.L (3), 18 Jan.- 1 Feb. (*MD, *RP) -- same birds ?

Greater White-fronted Goose

Fermi, 1 Dec.-14 Dec. (AS, PK et al.); SLSP (3), 24 Dec. (DB); Rend L (11), 1 Jan. (TF, JD); UCCA (4), 12 Jan. (BD); Danville (3--1 had orange bill, Greenland race?), 1 Dec.-8 Jan. (*SB et al.).

Snow Goose

Spfd (6), wintered (DB); Wilmette (imm. present since 19 Oct.), wintered (EW, m.ob.); Braidwood/Lorenzo (2), 23 Dec. (JM); Winnebago Co (imm.), 11-21 Jan. (BG).

Ross' Goose

Rend L (2), 15 Dec. (TF, JHa); Bald.L (3 ad. & 1

imm.), wintered (DKa et al.).

Canada Goose

MC: 3000+, Fermi, 14 Dec. (PK, m.ob.); JP (201), all winter (HR). "smaller race" MC: 500, Clin.L, 7-15 Dec. (MD, RP).

Wood Duck

Rend L (3 and 2), 15 Dec. (TF, JHa) and 1 Jan. (TF, JD), resp.; HLCA (6), 17 Dec. (TF, JD); Chi (17), 21 Dec. (JPu); Wilmette (male), 30 Dec. (LB); Braidwood (2), 22 Jan. (JM); Spfd (3), wintered (DB).

Green-winged Teal

MC: 13, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW). Others: LCNP (8), 19 Jan. (JM); Bald.L (2), 21 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa).

American Black Duck

MC: 107, Lorenzo (Will Co), 23 Dec. (JM); 66, Heidecke FWA, 17 Jan. (JM). Others: JP, 7 Dec.-22 Feb. (HR); Clin.L (25), 4 Jan. (RC).

Hybrid: Black Duck/Mallard, L Spfd, 10 Feb. (DB).

Mallard

MC: 3,200, Braidwood, 1 Jan. (JM). Others: JP (28--all winter), 4 Feb. (HR).

Northern Pintail

SLSP (2), 24 Dec. (DB); Clin.L(2--males), 12 Jan. (wintered) (RC); Lockport (male), 26 Jan. (JM).

Northern Shoveler

Carl.L (2 pairs), wintered (DKa).

Gadwall

MC: 22-115, Joliet, all winter (peak on 20 Jan.) (JM);

86, HLCA, 17 Dec. (SB et al.); 46, Spfd, 18 Jan. (DB). Others: MM (male), 14 Dec. (RCo); Chi (male), 20 Dec. (JPu); Winnebago Co (pair), 27 Dec. (BG); Clin.L, 25 Jan. (RC); 3 Feb. (pr.), Braidwood (JM).

American Wigeon

Chi (7), 21 Dec. (JPu); Spfd (15), 29 Dec. (DB); Clin. L (pr.), 12 Jan. (RC); Joliet (2 and 4), 5 Dec. and 5 Jan. (JM); Waukegan (male), 22 Jan. (SB); 31 Jan. (male-probably overwintered), Chi (EW); Bald.L (1-3), wintered (DKa).

Canvasback

MC: 625, Grafton (Jersey Co), 4 Jan. (MD,RP). Others: Chi (male), 28 Dec. (JL); Chi (calumet park) (6), 1 Jan. (EW et al.); L Verm (3), 2 Jan. (fide RC); Anderson L (Fulton Co)(3), 11 Jan. (RC);

Redhead

Joliet (pr. & male), 5 Dec. and 11 Dec.-14 Feb. resp. (JM); Carb (20), 16 Dec. (SB); Carl.L (male), 1 Jan. (DKa); Chi (calumet park), 4 Feb. (WM).

Ring-necked Duck

Spfd (1 or 2 wintered), (DB); JP, 7 Dec.-17 Jan. (HR); Danville (1-4), 29 Dec- 1 Jan. (SB); Joliet (5-6), wintered (JM).

Greater Scaup

MC: 5,000, s.e. Evanston, 7 Jan. (LB); 1,350, Wilmette, 28 Dec. (EW); Others: L Spfd (5), 20 Jan. (DB); Waukegan (40+), 22 Jan. (SB); Joliet (2-3), wintered (JM); Carl.L (4-6), wintered (DKa).

Lesser Scaup

MC: 67-107, Joliet, all winter (JM). Others: Rock Cut S.P. (2 males), Dec.- mid Feb. (BG); Clin. L, 1 Jan. (RC); Chi (calumet park) (17), 4 Feb. (WM).

Harlequin Duck

JP, 19 Dec. (HR); Winthrop Harbor (2 imm.), 1 Feb. (DJ, JS); Chi (shedd aquarium) (female), mid-Jan. (3 sightings) (DJo, RH et al.).

Oldsquaw

MC: 800, Evanston, 5 Jan. (RB); 345, Wilmette, 28 Dec. (EW); 310, Waukegan, 1 Jan. (LB). Others: Clin.L (male) 7-13 Dec. (RC, MD, RS); Chi (50), 25 Dec. (RH).

Black Scoter

Chi (female or imm. male), 21 Dec. (RH); Chi (female), 7 Jan. (LB).

Surf Scoter

pr. wintered, Wilmette/Evanston (28 Dec.-14 Jan.) then s.e. Chi (calumet park) (15 Jan.-29 Feb.)

(*EW et al.).

White-winged Scoter

Wauk. (4), 1 Jan. (m.ob.); Evanston (2), 2 Jan. (RH, LB); Danville, 1-8 Jan. (SB); Rend L (imm.), 17 Jan. (TF, JD, BD).

Common Goldeneye

MC: 1,000, Rend L, 1-23 Jan. (TF); 600, Evanston, 5 Jan. (RB); 400, Heidecke FWA, 17 Jan. (JM); 310, Spfd, 9 Dec. (DB); 194, JP, 9 Feb. (HR). "Common Goldeneye/Hooded Merganser hybrid": 13 Dec.-16 Feb. (present on four dates), Spfd (DB); Joliet, 31 Jan. (*JM).

Bufflehead

Rock Cut S.P. (female), 13 Dec. (BG); Highland Park (18), 28 Dec. (EW); Waukegan (15), 22 Jan. (SB); JP, wintered, (HR); Spfd (4), all winter (DB); Joliet (8-13), wintered (JM).

Hooded Merganser

MC: 30, Bald.L, 20 Jan. (RP); Others: UCCA (7), 18 Dec. (SB et al.); Skokie (female), 21 Dec. (EW); Chi (female), 25 & 28 Dec. (JL); Waukegan (2), 1 Jan. (LB); Clin.L (female), 4 Jan. (RC); Rockford (female & male), 9-18 Jan. and 18-27 Jan. resp. (BG); JP, 2 wintered, (HR); Grundy/Will Co (several wintered), (JM).

Common Merganser

MC: 15,000, Pekin, 20 Jan. (RC); 4,000, Powerton L (Tazewell Co), 26 Jan. (RP); 2,000, Heidecke F.W.A., 17 & 24 Jan. (JM); 1,500, LCNP, 19 Jan. (JM). Others: Chi (50), 21 Dec. (RH); Spfd (100), 19 & 20 Jan. (DB); Clin.L (55), 27 Jan. (SB).

Red-breasted Merganser

MC: 592, JP, 9 Feb. (HR); 280, Evanston, 13 Jan. (EW). Others: Spfd (7), 3 & 6 Dec. (DB); West Chicago (female), 13 Dec. (RCo); Rend L (20), 27 Dec. (TF, DR); Will/Grundy Co's (12), 13 Jan. (JM).

Ruddy Duck

Carl.L (4), 27 Jan. (DKa); Carb, wintered (BD); Joliet (3-5) wintered (JM).

Black Vulture

MC: 99, Johnson Co, 31 Jan. (TF). Other: Pope Co (6), 3 Jan. (TF).

Turkey Vulture

MC: 163, Johnson Co, 31 Jan. (TF); Saline Co, 3 Jan. (JD).

Bald Eagle

Statewide Mid-winter Survey: 2,025 (71.1% ad. &

28.3% imm.), mid Jan. (fide VK). MC: 71 ad. and 51 imm., Quad City area (Rock Island Co), 17 Jan. (PP); 83, Lock & Dam 13 (Whiteside Co), 26 Jan. (DS). Others: O'Brien Lock & Dam (ad.), 3 Dec. (EW, WM, SF); CBG (imm.), 17 Dec. (LB); Lincolnwood (ad.), 21 Dec. (fide EW); Fulton/Schuyler/Cass & Mason Co (15 ad. & 3 imm.), 11 Jan. (RC et al.); Heidecke F.W.A. (imm. & ad.) 24 Jan. and 28 Feb. resp. (JM); Clin.L (imm.), 25 Jan. (RC); Chatauqua N.W.R. (54), 26 Jan. (RP).

Northern Harrier

Homer, 10 Dec. (JS); Matteson (Cook Co), 4 Feb. (WM); n.w. Du Page Co and Fermi, one wintered at each locale, (KL & RCo, PK); none recorded in Spfd (DB). Scarce.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Homer, 16 Dec. (JS); Crane L (Mason Co), 11 Jan. (RC); Stone Park (Cook Co), 21 Jan. (WM); Potomac (Vermillion Co), 2 Feb. (SB); Spfd, a few wintered (DB); M.Arb, one wintered (EW, m.ob.).

Cooper's Hawk

Homer, 2 Dec. & 11 Feb. (JS); Spfd (2), 13 Dec. (DB); Bismarck (Vermillion Co), 15 Jan. (fide SB); Clin.L, 27 Jan. (SB); Penfield (Champaign Co), 22 Feb. (RC); s.w. Cook Co (4 wintered) (WS, m.ob.); M.Arb, (one wintered) (EW, m.ob.). Rather frequent in n.e. IL.

Northern Goshawk

M.Arb, 29 Dec.-1 Jan. (AS, RCo et al.); De Witt Co (imm.) 25 Jan. (MD); Urbana, 2 Feb. (RC); Penfield (Champaign Co), 22 Feb. (RC); Turtlehead L F.P. (Cook Co) (imm.), 29 Feb. (WS); JP, (wintered) (KC, m. ob.); Rockford (wintered) (JDo).

Red-shouldered Hawk

Homer, 1-12 Dec. & 2-5 Feb. (JS); Addison (Du Page Co), 11 Dec. (EW); St. Joseph (Champaign Co), 14 Dec. (AR); Chi, 24 Dec. (WM); Oak Forest, 3 Jan.-29 Feb. + (WS); Spfd, 31 Jan. (DO).

Red-tailed Hawk

MC: 21, LCal, 28 Dec. (WM); 12, Spfd, 1 Feb. (DB); 11, MM area, 14 Dec. (EW, TB). "Dark morph": Bolingbrook (Will Co), 13 & 15 Dec. (*WM). "Harlan's Hawk": 14 Dec., 19 Jan. & 16 Feb., Spfd (DB).

Rough-legged Hawk

MM (3), 14 Dec. (EW, TB); Techny (Cook Co), 28 Dec (LB); Cook Co, 11 Jan. (SF); Vermillion Co (2), 4 Feb. (JS); Sangamon Co, wintered in small numbers (light phase) (DB). Few reported.



Adult Mew Gull (center) with Ring-billed Gulls at Burnham Harbor, Chicago (Cook Co.), 20 February 1992. Note Mew Gull's obviously darker mantle. Photo by Robert Hughes.

Golden Eagle

Rock Cut S.P. (imm.), 4 Dec. (BG); HLCA (2-- ad. & imm.), 17 Dec. (TF, JD, SB); Union Co, 18 Dec. (SB et al.); Alexander Co (ad.), 20 Jan. (TF); UCCA (1st yr.), 29 Jan. (TF); Pope Co (1st yr.), 19 Feb. (TF).

American Kestrel

MC: 20, Highway 39 between Bloomington & Lindenwood, 14 Feb. (SB); 16, LCal, 28 Dec. (WM); 16, Sangamon Co, 28 Dec. (DB).

Merlin

M.Arb (ad. male), 15 Dec. & 19 Feb. (EW, m.ob.); Chi, 27 Dec. & 2 Jan. (RH) - same bird?; Whiteside Co, 28 Dec. (PP); Pope Co (ad. male), 26 Jan.- 8 Mar. (TF, JD, DKa). First confirmed overwintering Merlins in state history.

Peregrine Falcon

Chi (burnham harbor), 29-31 Dec. (JM, WM).

Prairie Falcon

Deland (Piatt Co), 18 Jan. (*MD,*RP); Piatt Co, 25 Jan. (RC) - same birds?

Ring-necked Pheasant

MC: 35, GLPSP, 17 Jan. (JM); 8, SLSP, 29 Jan. (DB).

Greater Prairie-Chicken

Marion Co (2), 16 Feb. (TF, JD, DKa).

Wild Turkey

near MM (12), 14 Dec. (EW, TB); Clin.L (2), 1 Feb. (RP).

Northern Bobwhite

MC: 14, Spfd area, 14 Dec. (DB--few after hunting season).

Virginia Rail

Crest Hill (Will Co), 11-18 Dec. (*JM); IBSP (3), 1 Jan. (JSo, JN--video).

Sora

Crest Hill (Will Co), 11- 18 Dec. (*JM).

American Coot

MC: 56, Rend L, 15 Dec. (TF); 30, JP, 1 Dec. (HR); 23, Braidwood, 22 Jan. (JM). Others: Winnebago Co, 3 Dec.-mid Jan. (BG); Chi, 28 Dec. (JL); GLNTC 1 Jan. (LB); wintered in small numbers at Spfd (DB); 1 wintered at Joliet - but 3 present on 20 Jan. (JM).

Killdeer

LD: 15 Dec. (2), Clin.L (RC).

Common Snipe

Glenview and Techny (2 and 1), 28 Dec. (m.ob. & LB, resp.); Decatur, 12 Jan. wintered (RP); Hoopeston (Vermillion Co) (2), 13 Jan. (SB); UCCA (12), 20 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa, CWa).

RED PHALAROPE

Carl.L, 5-13 Jan. (JV, *DKa). First IL winter record.

Sanderling

Rend L (2), 15 Dec. (*SB). Probable identification.

Franklin's Gull

Sunset Pk. (Rock Island Co), 11 & 12 Jan. (PP).

Little Gull

Spfd, 2 Dec. (DB); Clin.L, 4-15 Dec. (RS).

Bonaparte's Gull

MC: 1,000, Rend L, 1 Jan. (TF, JD). Others: Evanston (ad. winter), 7 Jan. (EW); Bald.L (4-5), 19 & 21 Jan. (DKa, TF, JD)

MEW GULL

Chi (diversey harbor), 15 Dec. (*RH); Chi (2--1 at montrose harbor, 1 at burnham harbor), 16 Jan. (RH--photo); Chi (burnham harbor), 20 Feb. (RH--photo). Possibly four different birds.

Ring-billed Gull

MC: 2,500+, Chi, 31 Jan. (EW); 1,100, Chi, 25 Dec. (EW, AS, KH et al.); 1,000-2,000, Spfd, all winter



First-winter Thayer's Gull at Dresden Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake (e. Grundy Co.), 20 December 1991. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

(DB); 725, Chi (burnham harbor), 4 Feb. (WM); 685, JP, 9 Feb. (HR); 136, Will Co, 10 Jan. (JM).

CALIFORNIA GULL

LCal (ad.), 2 & 3 Dec. (*RH & EW, WM, SF, resp.).

Herring Gull

MC: 4,600, LCal, 24 Dec. (WM); 2,600+, Chi, 31 Jan. (EW); 1,500-3,000, Will/Grundy Co's, 19 Dec.-17 Jan. (JM). Other: Spfd (50), 16 Jan. (DB).

Thayer's Gull

MC: 9, Chi, 25 Dec. (RH, EW et al.). Others: O'Brien Lock & Dam (3--ad. & 2 1st winter) (EW); Rock Island Co (3), 15 Dec.-13 Feb. (PP); Zion (2), 25 Dec. (JL); Dolton (5, 6 & 5), on 26 Jan., 8 Feb. & 16 Feb. resp. (JL); Greene Valley F.P. (Du Page Co) (ad.), 13 Dec. (*WM); Wauk. (2--ad. & 1st -winter), 1 Jan. (LB); Grundy Co (ad. & 1st winter), 5 Dec.-24 Jan. & 20 Dec.-3 Jan., resp. (JM); Will Co (ad. & 1st winter), 29 & 31 Dec. & 11 Jan., resp. (JM); Spfd (ad. & 1st winter), 16 Jan. & 24 Dec. (DB); Alton (ad.), 19 & 21 Jan. (DKa et al.); Anderson L (Fulton Co) (1st winter), 11 Jan. (RC).

Iceland Gull

LCal (1st winter), 5 Dec. (RH); Grundy Co (1st winter), 1 Jan. (JM); Wilmette, 5 Jan. (fide EW); Chi (1st winter), 5 Jan. (EW); Evanston (2nd winter), 7 Jan. (EW); Lock & Dam 15 (Rock Island Co), 9 Jan. (*PP); Will Co (1st winter), 12 Jan. (SF); Peoria (ad.), 20 Jan.



Adult Thayer's Gull (in flight, center) at Dresden Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake (e. Grundy Co.), 19 December 1991. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.



Adult Iceland Gull at Burnham Harbor, Chicago (Cook Co.), January 1992. Compare wingtip pattern to previous photo. Photo by Robert Hughes.

(RC); Sunset Pk. (Rock Island Co) (2), 12 Jan. (*PP); Chi (ad.--non Kumlien's & 1st winter), 31 Jan. (EW); Chi (ad.) 26 Jan. (WM); Chi (3rd & 4th winter), 8 Feb. (WM); Butternut Pkwy (Rock Island Co) (ad. & imm.), five dates between 2-13 Feb. (*PP). Good numbers.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Clin.L (1st winter), 7 Dec. (MD); Greene Valley F.P. (Du Page Co) (ad.), 13 Dec. (*WM); Chi (montrose) (ad.), 22 Dec. (JPu); LCal (ad. winter), 26-31 Jan. (EW) but 2 ad. on 28 Dec. (WS); Evanston (1st winter), 4 Jan. (EW); Anderson L (ad.), 11 Jan. (RC); Butternut Pkwy (Rock Island Co) (ad.), 11 Jan. & 2 Feb. (PP); Peoria Lock & Dam (ad.), 26 Jan. (RP); Decatur (1st winter), 28 Feb. (MD).

SLATY-BACKED GULL

Rock Island Arsenal (Rock Island Co) (ad.), 6 Feb. (*PP). Third state record.

Glaucous Gull

LCal (ad.), 7 Dec. (DMA); Chi (ad.) 30 Dec. (LB); Will Co (3--ad. & 2 1st winter), 10 Jan. (JM); Grundy Co (2 1st-winters), 11 Jan. (JM); Decatur (1st winter), 12 Jan. (RP,MD); Alton (ad.), 21 Jan. (TF,DKa); Chi (shedd aquarium) (4--3 imm. & 1 ad.), 22 Jan. (LB); Clin.L (ad.), 25 Jan. (RC); Chi (5--3 1st winter, ad., 1st winter), 31 Jan. (EW); Mallard Lake F.P. (Du Page Co) (2 ad. summer plumage), 27-28 Feb. (EW).

Great Black-backed Gull

Will Co (2--ad. & 1st winter), 23 Dec. (JM); LCal (1st winter), 24 & 28 Dec. (WM); Chi (2nd winter), 29 Dec. (RC); Wauk (ad.), 1 Jan. (LB); LCal (ad.), 4 Jan. (WS);

O'Brien Lock & Dam (1st winter), 10-13 Jan. (SF); LCal (1st winter), 1 Feb. (JL); Alton (1st winter), 21 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa); Butternut Pkwy (Rock Island Co) (2), 9 & 11 Feb. (*PP).

Black-legged Kittiwake

Wilmette (1st winter), 20 Dec. (EW).

IVORY GULL

Chi (montrose), 25 Dec. & later at Chi (burnham harbor) (1st winter), 26 Dec.-2 Jan. (*KH, *AS, *EW & *m.ob.--photos and video).

Mourning Dove

MC: 122, Alsip, 11 Dec. (SF); 60, Sangamon Co, 4 Jan. (DB); 60, Homer, 30 Jan. (JS); 35, Bismarck, 16 Jan. (SB).

Eastern Screech-Owl

MC: 37, Vermilion Co, 16 Jan. (SB); 7, Sangamon Co, 15 Dec. (DB).

Great Horned Owl

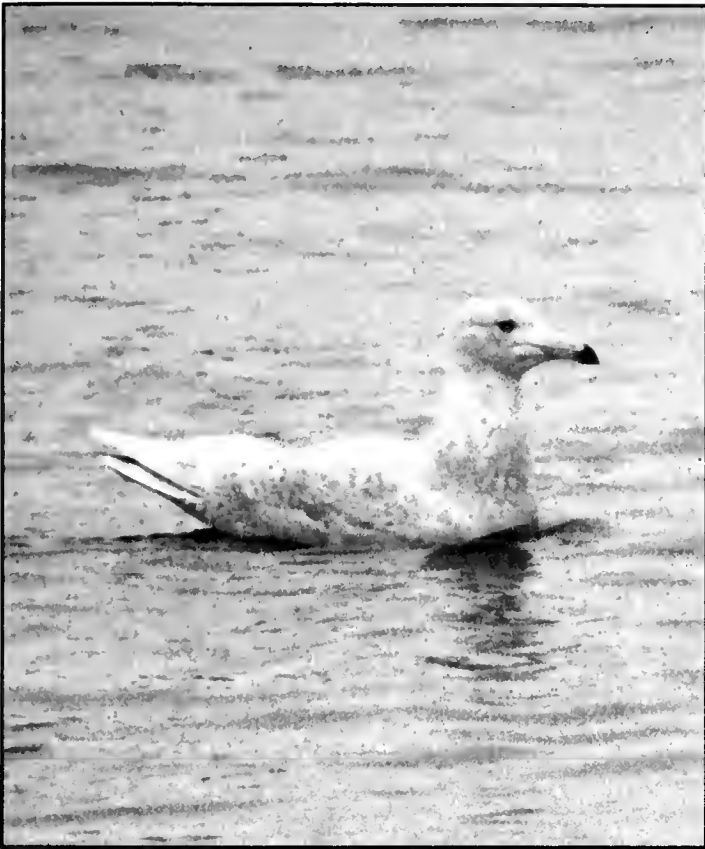
Sangamon Co (7), 28 Dec. (DB);

Snowy Owl

43 recorded sightings in northern half of state since early Nov. MC: 3, Chi, 3 Jan. (RH). Reported from Hinsdale, Wauk, Evanston, Chi, Kane Co, Dixon, Decatur, etc.

Barred Owl

Sangamon Co (5), 15 Dec. (DB).



First-winter Glaucous Gull at Dresden Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake (e. Grundy Co.), 31 December 1991. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.



First-winter Glaucous Gull at Dresden Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake (w. Will Co.), 10 January 1992. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.



Adult Great Black-backed Gull (with Herring Gulls) at Dresden Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake (w. Will Co.), 19 December 1991. Present since 2 December 1991. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.



Immature (first-winter) Ivory Gull at Burnham Harbor, Chicago (Cook Co.), 30 December 1991. Third state record. Photo by Robert Hughes.

Long-eared Owl

MC: 10, MM, 14 Dec. (EW, TB). Others: KCP, 1 Jan.-28 Feb. (ME, SB); Clin.L, 4 Dec. (RSa); Homer L (Champaign Co), 14 Dec. (RC); Danville, 28 Dec. (RC); Clin.L, 11 Jan.- 1 Feb. (RC, MD, m.ob.); s.w. Cook Co, 11 Jan. & 4 Feb. (SF, WM); Winnebago Co (wintered) (JDo).

Short-eared Owl

n.w. Du Page Co, 1 Dec. (KL); Clin.L, 4 Dec. (RS); FGP, 28 Dec. (RC); 4 Vermillion Co sites (29 Dec., 1 Jan., 22 Jan. & 2 Feb.-2 Mar.), (SB); Piatt Co, 25 Jan. (RC); Macon Co, 1 Feb. (MD, RP); Marion Co, 16 Feb. (TF, JD, DKa).

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Shirland (Winnebago Co), 27 Dec. (BG); Allerton Park (Piatt Co) (2-3), 12 Jan.-23 Feb. (MD, RC, TF, JD, m.ob.); scattered early Dec.-mid-Feb. dates representing 3 birds in Winnebago Co (Pecatonica, Sugar River & Colored Sands F.P.s) (JDo, m.ob.); Cache River (Johnson Co), 17 Feb. (TF, JD); Carl.L, 20 Feb.- 12 Mar. (DKa) - number of pellets at roost site show bird was present since about mid-Jan.

Belted Kingfisher

MC: 12, Vermillion Co, 1 Jan. (SB); 8, Will Co, Dec.-/Jan. (JM).

Red-headed Woodpecker

MC: 20, Jordan Creek F.P., 5 Jan. (JS); 8, Sangamon Co, 27 Jan. (DB); 5+, Du Page Co, all winter (EW). Influx into n.e. IL.

Red-bellied Woodpecker

MC: 14, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB); 12, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW et al.).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Spfd, wintered in small numbers (DB); M.Arb., wintered (RCo et al.).

Hairy Woodpecker

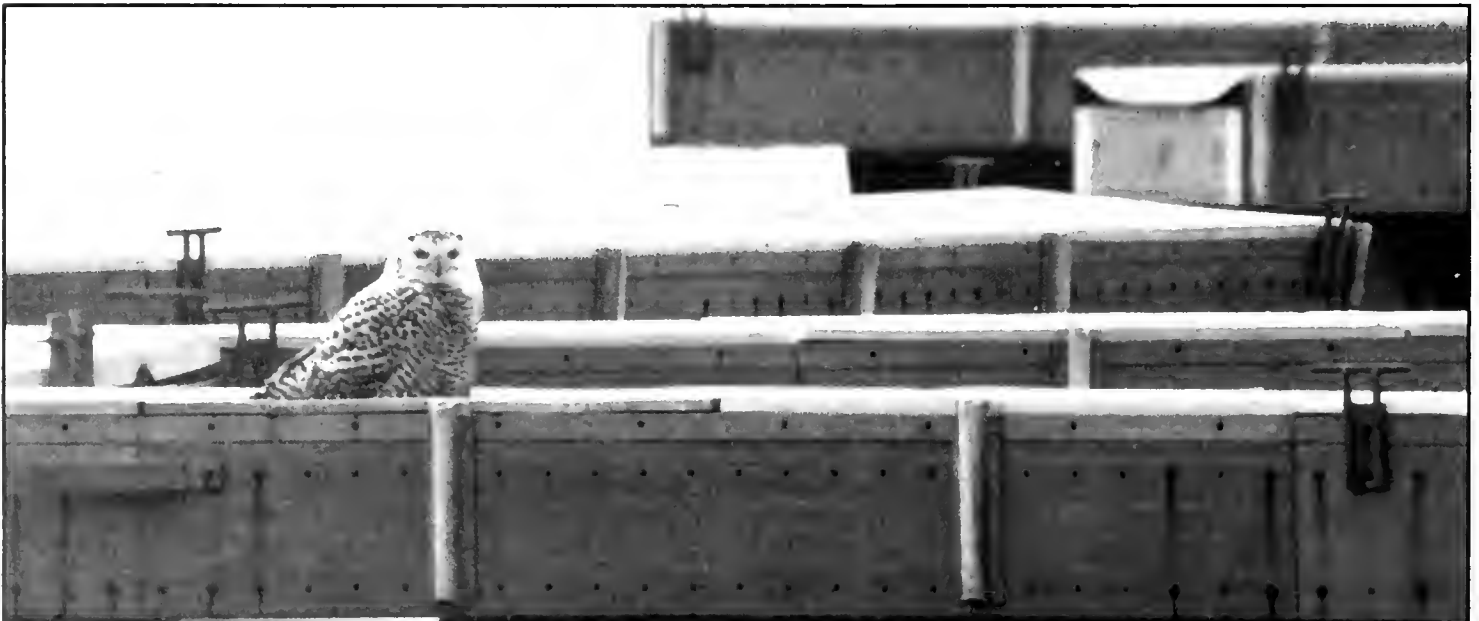
Spfd (4), 24 Feb. (DB).

Pileated Woodpecker

MC: 5, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB). Others: Homer (2), all winter (JS); Peoria, 4 Jan. (DS).

Eastern Phoebe

Greene Valley F.P. (Du Page Co), 15 Dec. (*AW et al.); Vermilion Co (3), 28 Dec. (*JS, *SB); Wheaton (Du Page Co), 4 Jan. (RCo).



Snowy Owl at Burnham Harbor, Chicago (Cook Co.), 29 December 1991. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

Horned Lark

MC: 2,000, Homer, 4 Dec. (JS). Other: Spfd (110), 15 Jan. (DB).

Blue Jay

MC: 37, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW, RCo et al.); 35, Spfd, 15 Dec. (DB).

American Crow

MC: 30,000, Danville, all winter (SB); 20,000, Beardstown area, 11 Jan. (RC et al.). Others: JP (105), 17 Feb. (HR); Spfd (100), 14 Dec. (DB).

FISH CROW

HLCA, 17 Dec.(3) (*SB, VK, TF) and 20 Jan. (TF et al.). 1st confirmed winter records for the state.

Black-capped Chickadee

MC: 49, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW et al.); 28, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB); 7, JP, 25 Dec. (DA).

Tufted Titmouse

MC: 22, Spfd, 24 Feb. (DB).

Red-breasted Nuthatch

MC: 7, Diswood (Alexander Co), 17 Dec. (SB, MDo). Others: near MM, 15 Dec. (EW); Spfd (2), 31 Dec. & 3 Jan. (DB); SRSF (Mason Co) (2), 26 Jan. (RP).

White-breasted Nuthatch

MC: 11, Spfd, 9 Dec. (DB).

Brown Creeper

MC: 19, UCCA, 18 Dec. (SB, MDo); 11, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB); 3, Homer, 4 Jan. (JS).

Carolina Wren

MC: 12, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB). Others: Chi (4 + wintered) (EW et al.), Champaign area (numerous wintered) (RC), Rockford (numerous wintered) (JDo); Joliet (one wintered) (JM).

Bewick's Wren

Lodge Park (Piatt Co), 16 Feb. (RC).

Winter Wren

MC: 7, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB); 4, UCCA, 18 Dec. (SB, MDo). Others: Clin.L (2), 15 Dec. (RC); Winnetka, 28 Dec. (m.ob.).

Marsh Wren

Spfd, wintered (DB).

Golden-crowned Kinglet

MC: 24, UCCA, 18 Dec. (SB, MDo); 6, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB); 6, Grafton (Jersey Co), 4 Jan. (RP).



Northern Mockingbird at eastern Grundy County, 1 January 1992. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Union Co, 20 Jan. (TF, JD et al.).

Eastern Bluebird

MC: 12, Grafton (Jersey Co), 4 Jan. (RP). Others: M.Arb (6), 1 Feb. (RCo et al.) - probably wintered.

American Robin

MC: 38, Evanston, 28 Dec. (EW et al.); 20, Spfd, 23 Dec. (DB).

Varied Thrush

Spfd (female), 27 Dec. (DB).

Northern Mockingbird

MC: 5, Spfd, 28 Dec. (DB); 3, Vermilion Co, 1 Jan. (SB et al.). Others: West Chicago, 14 Dec.- late Jan. (MS); Naperville, 15 Dec. (*WM); LRSNC, 15 Dec. (fide EW); Grundy Co, 1 Jan. (JM); Lisle, 2 Jan. (fide EW); 10 Jan.-5 Feb., Rockford (JDo).

Brown Thrasher

M.Arb, early Dec.- early Jan. (m.ob.).

Cedar Waxwing

Grafton (Jersey Co) (4), 4 Jan. (RP); Spfd (none wintered) (DB). Scarce.

Northern Shrike

Highland Park, 24 Dec. (m.ob.); e. Grundy Co (2), 1 Jan. (JM); Fermi, 1 Jan. (PK); n.w. Du Page Co, wintered (KL, RCo).

Loggerhead Shrike

MC: 4, Bald.L., 20 Jan. (RP). Other: Urbana, 25-27 Jan. (EC, m.ob.).

Yellow-rumped Warbler

MC: 63, Fern Clyffe S.P., 23 Jan. (TF). Other: Winnetka, 28 Dec. (m.ob.).

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH

Chi, 21 Dec. (MH et al.). About the 4th n.e. IL winter record.

Northern Cardinal

MC: 57, Spfd, 28 Dec. (DB).

Rufous-sided Towhee

Spfd (4), 7 Dec. (DB); LRSHNC, 15 Dec. (EW).

American Tree Sparrow

MC: 100, Spfd, 29 Jan. (DB); 56, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW).

Chipping Sparrow

Saline Co, 9 Jan. (*JD).

Field Sparrow

MC: 6, Danville, 1 Jan. (SB); 4, Spfd, 7 Dec. (DB).

Vesper Sparrow

HLCA (2), 17 Dec. (SB).

Savannah Sparrow

Franklin Co (4), all winter (TF, JD); Vermilion Co (3), 13 Jan. (SB).

LeConte's Sparrow

Franklin Co (3), all winter (TF, JD); Spfd, 2 Dec. (DB).

Fox Sparrow

M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW); Techny (Cook Co), 28 Dec. (LB); Spfd, a few wintered (DB).

Song Sparrow

MC: 25, Spfd, 28 Dec. (DB); 20, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW).

Lincoln's Sparrow

Saline Co, 14 Jan. (*JD).

Swamp Sparrow

MC: 15, Spfd, 14 Dec. (DB); 10, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW).

White-throated Sparrow

MC: 14, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW); 12, Spfd, 14 Dec. (DB).

White-crowned Sparrow

MC: 19, Spfd, 28 Dec. (DB); 17, Techny (Cook Co), 27 Dec. (LB).



Adult Northern Shrike at Braidwood Nuclear Plant Cooling Lake, Braidwood (Will Co.), 22 January 1992. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

Lapland Longspur

MC: 500+, UCCA, 20 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa, CWa); 400, Vermilion Co, 2 Feb. (SB); 200, Jackson Co, 15 Jan. (BD); 200, Homer, 11 Dec. (JS); 50, Spfd, 3 Dec. (DB).

Snow Bunting

MC: 130, Seneca (LaSalle Co), 19 Jan. (JM). Others: M.Arb (2), 15 Dec. (EW); SLSP, 3 Dec. (DB).

Red-winged Blackbird

MC: 12,500, LCal, 23 Feb. (WM).

Eastern Meadowlark

MC: 18, Spfd, 24 Dec. (DB); 11, Danville, 1 Jan. (SB); 10, Techny (Cook Co), 28 Dec. (LB); 7, Fermi, 10 Jan. (PK).

Western Meadowlark

Spfd, 1, 13 & 18 Feb. (DB).

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Zion, 1 Jan. (RB, LB); Alexander Co (ad. male), 20 Jan. (TF, JD, DKa, CW).

Rusty Blackbird

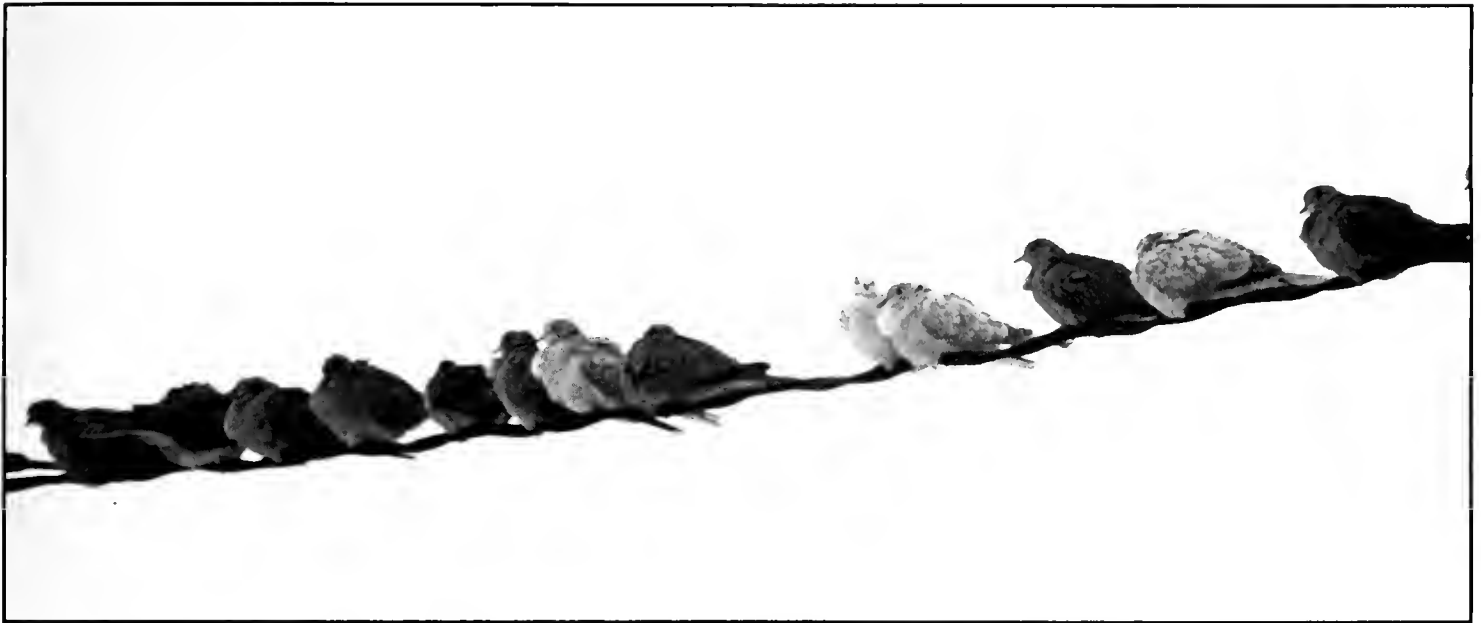
MC: 40, Spfd, 6 Feb. (DB).

Brewer's Blackbird

St. Clair Co, 7 Jan. (DKa); Homer (2), 8 Jan. (JS); Alexander Co (2), 20 Jan. (TF, DKa, CW).

Common Grackle

MC: 5,000, Spfd, 5 Feb. (DB).



Ringed Turtle-Doves (a few of 66 present) at Crest Hill (Will Co.), 26 January 1992. This exotic species has established a very successful population in Will County. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

Brown-headed Cowbird

MC: 1,100, Zion, 1 Jan. (LB); 775, Urbana, 14 Dec. (RC).

Purple Finch

Homer (2), 4 Dec. (JS); Spfd (2), 8 Dec. (DB); Bismarck (Vermilion Co) (1-5), early Dec.-early Jan. (SB).

House Finch

MC: 375, Langley Bottoms (Vermilion Co), 28 Dec. (SB); 137, Homer, 12 Feb. (JS); 42, Spfd, 14 Dec. (DB); 26, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW).

Red Crossbill

Urbana (3), 9 Jan. (RC).

Common Redpoll

MC: 200+, Clin. L, 25 Jan. (RC); 40+, Winnebago Co, 27 Dec. (BG). Others: M.Arb (5), 10 Jan. (RCo et al.), but 14 there on 18 Jan. (fide EW); Spfd (12), 19 Jan. (DB); Rend L, 26 Jan. (BD).

Pine Siskin

MC: 100+, Clin.L, 27 Jan. (SB); 25, M.Arb, 15 Dec. (EW et al.); 25, Sangamon Co, 16 Dec. (DB). Others: Saline Co (5), 12 Jan. (JD).

American Goldfinch

MC: 38, Spfd, 14 Dec. (DB).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Spfd (10), 25 Feb. (DB).

Finally, many thanks to all contributors who sent in field notes for this compilation. Contributors are requested to use the following schedule when submitting their notes to the appropriate Seasonal Editor (addresses of the four seasonal editors are listed on the following page).

<u>Season</u>	<u>Date Reports due to FIELD NOTES EDITOR</u>
WINTER SEASON 1 December - 29 February	7 March
SPRING MIGRATION 1 March - 31 May	7 June
BREEDING SEASON 1 June - 31 July	7 August
FALL MIGRATION 1 August - 30 November	7 December

FIELD NOTES COMPILERS:

Breeding Season

Vernon Kleen
Natural Heritage Div.
Dept. of Conservation
524 South 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Fall Migration

Robert Chapel
306 1/2 West California
Urbana, IL 61801

Winter Season

Robert Danley
2201 Clay Street
Murphysboro, IL 62966

Spring Migration

Eric Walters
720 Reba Place
Evanston, IL 60202

Winter Survival

How birds adapt to the coldest season

by Sheryl De Vore

Just as humans might fly to Mexico or Florida to escape the cold in winter, many avian species that spend summers in Illinois have long ago hitched a ride on the wind to warmer climates. But migration relates more to loss of food supply and not so much to the cold. Night-hawks, for example, have left Illinois by September or October because they depend solely on flying insects for food.

Other birds can remain during winter because of their ability to secure nourishment. For instance, chickadees and nuthatches have bills which enable them to glean dormant insects in tree barks that other migratory birds would not be able to obtain. Some ducks and nonmigratory geese can also find vegetative matter in open water, especially since the advent of aerated corporate ponds.

Finding food; however, is only one part of the struggle to

survive in winter. Birds must also keep warm. To do so, they possess certain anatomical features that make them more resistant to cold than mammals. Their hard bills, comprised of horn and not of skin, as well as their unexposed legs and feet, enable them to retain body heat. Special arrangement of arteries and veins in ducks and geese help keep their feet from freezing to the ice on frozen ponds.

Waterproof feathers also protect birds from extreme cold. To get the most benefit out of that feature, birds fluff their feathers which traps a blanket of warm air that surrounds their bodies. Tucking a foot or a bill into the feathers also helps reduce heat loss.

Some birds may actually produce extra feathering in winter to increase their fluffing capabilities. A White-throated Sparrow may have 1,525 fea-

thers in fall and 2,600 feathers in winter.

Birds also roost in communes for warmth. Six or more chickadees might spend a frigid winter's night nestled together in a tree cavity to conserve body heat. Twelve or more bluebirds may huddle in a nesting box while cardinals may roost in conifers. Snow buntings often remain buried beneath the snow for one or more days at a time during intensely cold periods.

Birds such as chickadees may also shiver while at rest to produce heat, but must often replenish that used-up energy with food. Nearby feeders often offer that extra needed nourishment.

While watching birds this winter, take time to observe the specific behaviors that demonstrate their remarkable adaptations to cold. ■

LISTER'S CORNER

by Richard Palmer

The tabulation that follows will be the final Lister's Corner I will compile. I plan to retire and move to Arizona to pursue full-time birding. Thanks to all of the participants from the past six years. I hope you will give the new Lister's Corner editor the same consideration you have shown me.

The report for this year differs from prior years in that it is a compilation of all the years that have been reported from 1986-91. At least 98 reporters have contributed over the years with 67 of the 102 counties having observers over the threshold barrier.

Kevin Richmond (314 in '86), Louise Augustine (310 in '86), Eric Walters (307 in '90), Louise Augustine (302 in '88) and Myrna Deaton (301 in '88) remain the top leaders to beat for those of you planning your big year.

- 3424 Spring Creek Road
Decatur, IL 62526-2848

* = Totals last updated
in 1990

= Totals last updated
pre-1990

ILLINOIS LIFE LIST (Threshold = 225)

374 H. David Bohlen	332 Virginia Humphreys#	301 Sue Stroyls
364 Richard Biss	332 Alan Stokie	300 Mark Swan
363 Louise Augustine	328 Steve Bailey	298 Beth Chato
363 Jeffrey R. Sanders	327 Elton Fawks	297 Jim Hampson
361 James E. Landing	324 Richard Anderson	294 Jeff Hardt
360 Robert Chapel	324 Betty Shaw	293 Michael Madsen
358 Kevin Richmond	323 Peter Peterson	292 Beth Chato
350 Robert Randall	322 Leroy Harrison#	291 Richard H. Peiser
345 Catherine Monday#	319 Todd Fink	291 Gilbert Waldbauer
343 Richard D. Palmer	319 Jim Funk#	288 Sue Friscia
342 Myrna Deaton	316 Michael J. Baum*	286 Marscha J. Chenoweth
342 Ron Goetz#	315 Gary Bowman#	286 Mary Lou Petersen
342 David B. Johnson	315 Norbert Gresey#	286 Wesley Serafin
340 Phoebe Snetsinger	315 Dick Young	285 John Robinson#
339 Lee G. Johnson	314 Muriel R. Smith	284 Kanae Hirabayashi
338 Vernon Kleen	311 Alan Anderson#	284 Denis Kania
337 Daniel Williams	311 Larry R. Jones*	282 Cindy Alberico
335 Joe Milosevich	311 W. Douglas Robinson*	282 Hal Cohen#
334 David Brenner	310 Helen Wuestenfeld*	280 Scott Hickman
334 Kay Hanson#	307 Mark Harris	279 Lynn McKeown*
333 Eric Walters	306 Jeff Donaldson	279 Robert Montgomery#
	306 Jack L. Wier	277 Cynthia Watkins
	305 Toby Brown	276 Jeffrey Brosdal
	304 Laurence C. Binford#	273 Marjorie Staubus#
	304 John McKee	272 Steve Hossler#
	304 Janine Polk	270 David L. Williams*
	303 Rich DeCoster	269 Bill Bertrand
	302 Robert Danley*	268 Mary Jane Easterday#
	302 Marc Perkowitz#	267 Marilyn Campbell#

267 Russell Puzey#
262 Craig Miller#
262 Zelma Williams#
260 Richard Wagner
256 Wilda Sutherland
253 Michael T. Bowers#
248 Marilyn Hougland

246 Darlene Fiske#
245 Roger Coons
244 Jan Eaton#
241 Walter E. Grundy#
241 Alex Meloy
239 Mike Carpenter#
234 Keith McMullen#

233 Sid Steele
232 Geoffrey A. Williamson
229 Robert Gruenewald#
226 William Bork#
225 Mark Lupton#

Editor's Note: Now's your chance to get started on your own list so that your name can be included in the next lister's corner. This is also your chance to contribute to Meadowlark. We're planning to do some stories on the thrill of listing the next time we publish Lister's Corner.

If you have any interesting stories about finding that great rare bird in Illinois, finally reaching your county or Illinois threshold, or anything related to the pursuit of listing birds in Illinois, please send it to: Sheryl De Vore, 967 Braeburn Road, Mundelein, IL 60060. Include your name, address, and phone number. ■

ANSWERS TO FIELD I.D. (page 101)

TEST YOUR SKILLS: Is it a Chipping or a Clay-colored Sparrow?

Figure 1. Clay-colored Sparrows:
(note pale lores on all specimens)

*Top- Juvenile (male) collected in North Dakota,
4 August 1902.*
*Middle- 1st basic (male) collected at McCormick
Place, Chicago, 3 November 1982. Note streaked
breast.*
*Bottom- Definitive basic (female) collected in Texas,
7 January 1916.*

Figure 2. Chipping Sparrows:
(note dark lores on all specimens)

*Top- Juvenile (male) collected at McCormick Place,
Chicago, 4 October 1984.*
*Middle- 1st basic (female) collected at New Haven,
Connecticut, 1 October 1925.*
*Bottom- Definitive basic (male) collected in
Wisconsin, 3 October 1899.*

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

* We accept manuscripts, photographs, and illustrations for possible publication in *Meadowlark*.

* Materials can only be returned if a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage is included. We can not be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs.

* Manuscripts should be typewritten or computer-generated, double spaced, and on only one side of numbered pages. Submit a computer disc sized 5 and 1/4 inches and formatted for ascii along with two hard copies of your manuscript.

* For photographs, we prefer clear black and white or color prints. Color slides may also be acceptable.

* We reserve the right to review and edit articles according to style, grammar, accuracy, and readability.

* Send articles and photographs to: Sheryl De Vore, Chief Editor, 967 Braeburn Road, Mundelein, IL 60060.

* Pen and ink drawings are also accepted. Contact art editor Walter Marcisz at (708) 385-8967.

DEADLINE DATES: Summer Issue - February 1; Fall Issue - May 1; Winter Issue - August 1; Spring Issue - November 1.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION:

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Fees: Full-time Student and Senior \$15, Individual \$20, Family \$30, Contributor \$50, Founder \$100 or more, Affiliate \$1,000.

BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Snowy Owl by Kanae Hirabayashi.

Meadowlark
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"All owls are weirdly beautiful, from the big white snowies that come down along the beaches on their cyclic winter invasions, to the mysterious little fellows that live in the desert mountains."

Roger Tory Peterson