

the behavior of a specific species and considering local foraging and weather conditions allows us to draw reasonable scientific conclusions using this data. Many thanks again to all who have helped this season's effort!

IOWA

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The 107th Christmas Bird Count included 33 counts from Iowa. This was the first year in seven that Keokuk did not turn in the high species count. Saylorville earned high honors this year with 96 species, smashing the previous record of 92 species, also set by Saylorville in December 1990. Other high counts this season included Clinton (81), Keokuk (78), and Davenport and Iowa City (77). De Soto National Wildlife Refuge (65) led the Missouri River counts. Spirit Lake (67) led the northern third. Despite a sub-zero start to the month, we had the warmest December since 1965, and none of the counts reported any snow cover. As a result open country birds were hard to find and feeder stations were poorly visited. With a few exceptions, there were no irruptions of north-country birds; however, most of our short-distant migrants lingered on in large numbers. Statewide it was a fantastic count by many measures. The species total of 141 exceeded the 133 species average and there were very few misses. A full 32 species were reported in record high numbers.

Two exceedingly good birds were reported this season. The **Slaty-backed Gull** discovered at Lake Manawa on the Omaha count might be the best Iowa CBC bird ever. The only other accepted record for Iowa was on the Mississippi River near Davenport in February 1989. Another nice find was the **Hoary Redpoll** discovered at the Brenton Arboretum on the Dallas County count. Initially the bird's identification was controversial, but because it

remained into February many were able to observe and photograph it. Four Snowy Owls were the most since 1993–94. Other notable finds were a Blue-winged Teal on the Yellow River Forest count, an Ovenbird at Cedar Falls-Waterloo, and a Yellow-headed Blackbird at Spirit Lake. Seven Black-billed Magpies were found on the Westfield count, which now has been recorded on five of the last seven years there. The only notable miss might have been Common Loon, which had been seen on 6 of the last 10 counts.

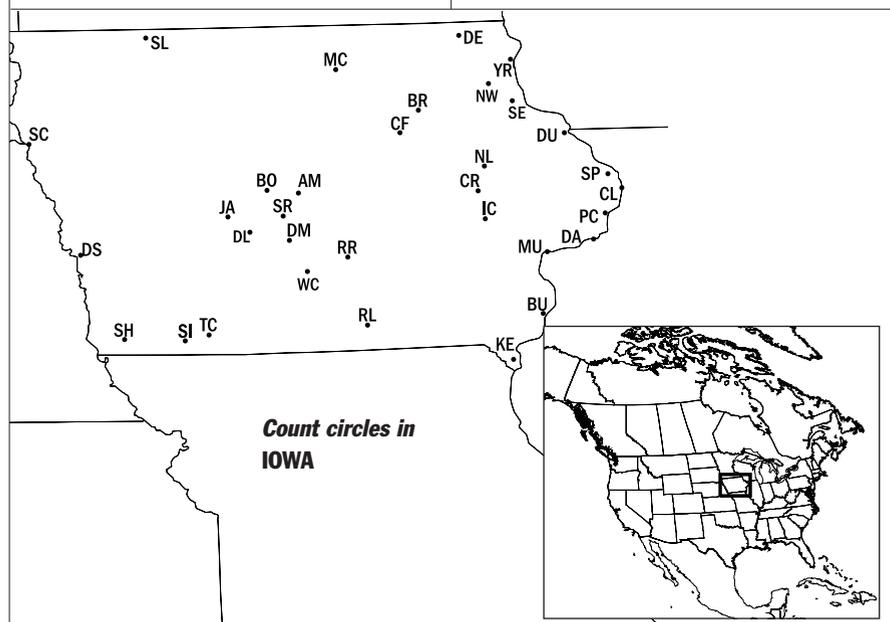
Waterfowl numbers were generally good, and all regular species were found. Canada Geese were found in record numbers, and Cackling Geese were reported from the majority of counts. Snow Geese were scattered around the state in modest numbers. A flock of 50 Greater White-fronted Geese was unusual at Iowa City. Trumpeter Swans were again found in record numbers, and 521 Tundra Swans were observed on the Clinton count. Mallards were found in average numbers, while Black Ducks were scarce. Gadwall and Wood Ducks were present in above average numbers. Canvasbacks were the most numerous divers. Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneye were also found in high numbers. Keokuk achieved the scoter trifecta, with one of each species. Long-tailed Ducks were at Keokuk, Spirit Lake, and Red Rock.



Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*), Dallas County, Iowa. Photo/John Wenck

Gallinaceous birds were difficult to find. Gray Partridge were reported from only three counts and Ruffed Grouse from two. Ring-necked Pheasants were also hard to find, but Wild Turkeys continue to do quite well. Great Blue Herons took advantage of the mild conditions and posted record numbers. Bald Eagles were found in near record numbers. Single Golden Eagles were reported from four counts. Northern Goshawks were found on two counts. No Prairie Falcons were reported this year. Wilson's Snipes were found at a nine-year low. Three Thayer's Gulls and a Glaucous Gull were at Saylorville, while a Bonaparte's was at Shenandoah. Eastern Screech-Owls had their best showing in nearly 20 years. All the other regular owls were also found in very good numbers.

Woodpeckers were abundant. Except for Red-headed Woodpeckers at a seven-year low, all other woodpeckers were



found in record numbers. Both shrikes were found in average numbers. Blue Jay numbers were slightly above average, while American Crows fell to slightly below average numbers. Horned Larks posted their second-lowest total in 20 years. Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse numbers were average. Red-breasted Nuthatches were found in respectable numbers, while White-breasted posted numbers 25 percent better than the record numbers of last year. Carolina Wrens more than doubled their previous record, and Winter Wrens were also found in good numbers. Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes, American Robins, and Northern Mockingbirds were all found in record numbers. Gray Catbirds were found on two counts. Yellow-rumped Warblers were reported in above average numbers. Sparrows performed fairly well. Three Eastern Towhees and five Spotted Towhees were reported. Fox Sparrows were at double the 10-year average and reported from 17 counts. White-throated and Swamp sparrows were found in numbers well above average. Lapland Longspurs were scarce outside of the northern counts. Nearly all the Snow Buntings were at Mason City. Icterids were well above average. Rusty Blackbirds had their third-highest total in 17 years. Brewer's Blackbirds were reported from five counts and a flock of 34 at Neal Smith NWR was notable. Great-tailed Grackles were found at Spirit Lake and Des Moines. Purple and House finch numbers were well below average. Three counts reported Common Redpoll. Pine Siskins were extremely scarce. A Taylor County Red Crossbill was the only crossbill. Eurasian Tree Sparrows continue to produce good numbers in southeast Iowa.

MISSOURI

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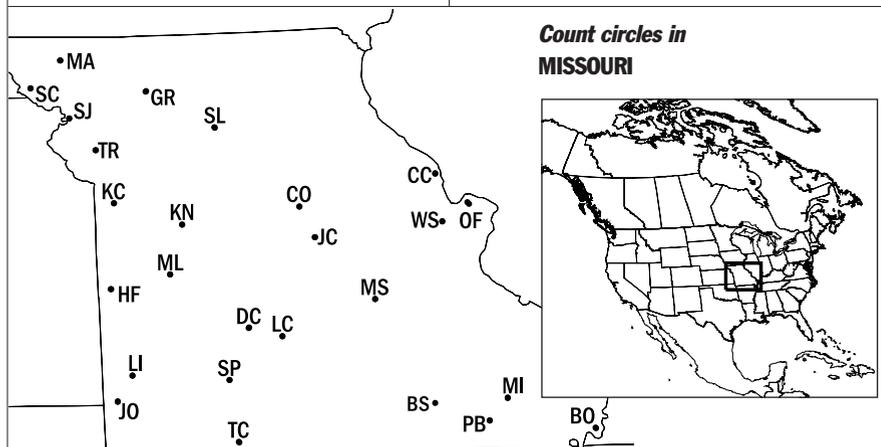
Twenty-six Christmas Bird Counts were held in Missouri this season. A total of 139 species was observed, which

is a few less than average for the past seven years (142). Weather was mild for most counts, with lows averaging 43 degrees Fahrenheit and highs averaging 58 degrees Fahrenheit. Only three counts started the day with below freezing temperatures, none of the counts reported the presence of snow, and only four of the counts reported the presence of ice on bodies of water. This reporter, who held his count on January 1, saw his first dandelion of the year during his count.

By far the most unusual species observed was a Baird's Sandpiper at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. This sighting is only the second winter record for Missouri and one of the few winter records for this species in North America. Other unusual sightings were six Tundra Swans (Squaw Creek), two White-winged Scoters (St. Joseph), one Long-tailed Duck (Maryville), an Eared Grebe (Springfield), one Black-crowned Night-Heron (Squaw Creek), one Peregrine Falcon and three Prairie Falcons (Squaw Creek), 13 Virginia Rails and three Soras (Columbia), five Greater Yellowlegs (Horton-Four Rivers), a Greater Roadrunner (Joplin), one Barn Owl (Big Oak Tree), one Northern Shrike (Squaw Creek), one Carolina Chickadee (north of range, in Columbia), one each Gray Catbird (Columbia and Kansas City), one each American Pipit (Liberal and Springfield), two Pine Warblers (Mingo), two Chipping Sparrows (Columbia), and two Snow Buntings (Maryville). Kansas City had a count week Orange-crowned Warbler. Not all of these reports have been reviewed and accepted by the Missouri Bird Records Committee.

High numbers include 4019 White-fronted Geese, 200,000 Snow Geese, 11 Ross's Geese, and 285 Cackling Geese (all at Squaw Creek); 3920 Ring-necked Ducks (Mingo); 170 Greater Scaup (Kansas City); 183 Wild Turkeys (St. Joseph); 55 Northern Bobwhite (Columbia); 46 Pied-billed Grebes (Springfield); 165 American White Pelicans (Montrose); 83 Great Blue Herons (Taney County); 127 Black Vultures (Taney County); 120 and 158 Bald Eagles (Clarence Cannon and Squaw Creek); 1004 American Coot (Kansas City); 148 Eurasian Collared-Doves (Springfield); seven Eastern Screech-Owl (Columbia and Dallas County); 130 Red-headed Woodpeckers (Mingo); 143 and 154 Carolina Wrens (Columbia, Springfield); 143 Yellow-rumped Warblers (Taney County); 52 Harris's Sparrow (Liberal); 1610 Rusty Blackbirds (Mingo); and 140 and 150 Great-tailed Grackles (St. Joseph and Orchard Farm).

Some species seen on more counts than usual include Greater White-fronted Goose (10 counts), Ross's Goose (9), Snow Goose (19), Ring-necked Duck (19), Common Goldeneye (17), Turkey Vulture (8), Cooper's Hawk (22), Merlin (9), Eurasian Collared-Dove (13), Short-eared Owl (9), Belted Kingfisher (925), and Le Conte's Sparrow (8). Eighteen species were seen on all 26 counts, including Bald Eagle and Eastern Bluebird. Some additional species for which the total number of birds was more than two times greater than the mean for the past seven years are Blue-winged Teal (31), Greater Scaup (173), Pied-billed Grebe (192), American White Pelican (189),



and Rusty Blackbird (2103). Some species for which the total number of birds was half or less the mean for the past seven years include Green-winged Teal, Double-crested Cormorant, both vultures, Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, Red-breasted Nuthatch (only 14 across the state), American Robin, American Pipit, Savannah Sparrow, most icterids, and Purple Finch (116). Clearly, it was a good year for waterfowl and a not-so-good year for northern erratics in Missouri. Species not reported on any count this year include Greater Prairie-Chicken, Osprey, Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, American Woodcock, Long-eared Owl, Common Yellowthroat, Common Redpoll, and Pine Siskin. Eurasian Tree Sparrows were seen on three counts (202 at Clarence Cannon, 581 at Orchard Farm, and 10 at Weldon Spring). No counts reported exceptionally high numbers of robins or blackbirds, as happens some years.

The total number of person-counts was 473, with another 30 feederwatchers. Squaw Creek had the highest species total (99), with Columbia (95) and Montrose Lake (93) coming in second and third. On average, 74 species were seen on each count.

ARKANSAS

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As far as weather goes for the 107th Christmas Bird Count in Arkansas, a several year drought continued in the southwest portion of the state. The rest of the state had excellent water levels. Many of the counts endured rainy conditions on count day.

As a result, we *finally* had water and ducks! After several years of poor conditions, this year produced the best dabbling ducks in 12 years. Most of this water was standing and the lock-n-dams along the Arkansas River weren't releasing much water, resulting in the lowest gull numbers in nine years. The rainy weather reduced the statewide party hours by 17 percent, but this didn't seem to affect



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Photo/Robert H. Doster

the number of individual birds (559,505) or overall number of species (156). The rain may have contributed to several counts seeing five-plus drops in species numbers. An early December snow event probably pushed many semi-hardy lingerers out of the Arkansas River valley and into Southern Arkansas or Louisiana.

Twenty-one counts participated; of those, eight counts tallied more than 90 species, with Arkadelphia and Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge leading with 113 and 114, respectively. Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge used an airboat to get access to new areas and tallied the highest number of individuals—121,889. Two counts set new highs: North Fork of the Illinois Bayou and Village Creek State Park. Pine Bluff had the most new species—seven—while Big Lake and Holla Bend, with eight, had the most new highs.

As for the broad groups, geese, diving ducks, shorebirds, grassland species, “blackbirds,” and western species appeared in average numbers. Semi-hardy waterbirds and semi-hardy lingering passerines were a bit lower than the 12-year average. Raptors put in the best showing in 12 years. Irrupective species were very low with only 77 individuals present.

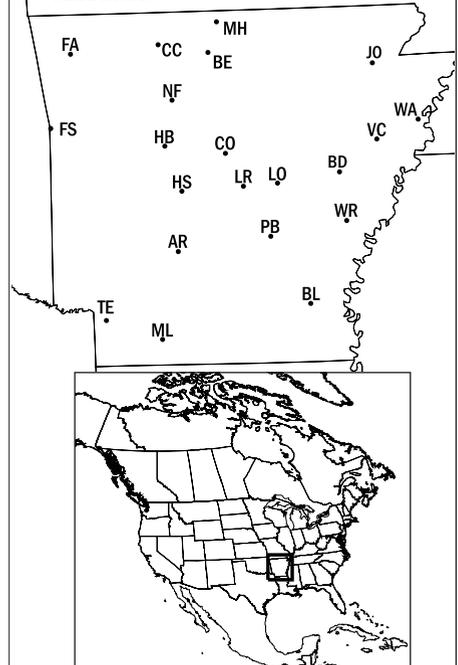
The only “missed” individual bird species statewide were Long-billed Dowitcher, Blue-headed Vireo, and Great-tailed Grackle. Five dabbling duck species had excellent numbers, with

Gadwall showing the best count in 12 years. Double-crested Cormorant showed the worst numbers in seven years, a 37 percent decrease. American Coots posted the best numbers in 12 years, a 45 percent increase. Historically, Eurasian Collared-Doves rapidly expanded until the 102nd count, then stayed high through the 104th count and now appear to have stabilized at an average 312 birds. Northern “Yellow-shafted” Flicker showed a 10 percent increase over the 12-year average. All other woodpeckers remained at average levels, with the big-showy-black-and-white one still not putting in an appearance. Eastern Bluebirds and American Robins put in their best appearance in eight years, feeding in huge flocks on Eastern Red Cedar berries. White-crowned Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco had their best numbers in 12 years. Finally, the declining Rusty Blackbird had a second good year in a row.

In terms of rarities, the Summer Tanager returned to Fayetteville for at least the third year, but the **bird of the year** was the first Arkansas CBC **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** at Pine Bluff.

As always, the compilers and observers deserve thanks for their hard work (their 941 hours worth of effort!), despite the wet, cool weather. Thank you!

Count circles in ARKANSAS



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What can one say about a Christmas Bird Count season that produced not one, but two first state records: **White-winged Crossbills** on the Claiborne CBC in the northwest, and **Mangrove Cuckoo** at New Orleans in the southeast? The crossbills, as is their wont, avoided photographs, and so they will not earn a place on the official state list. But the cuckoo, conjured from an unlikely woodlot with a canopy shattered 16 months earlier by Hurricane Katrina, posed for two days for anyone who came to see it in the riot of new growth that formed the understory. While many might have predicted that Mangrove Cuckoo might eventually find a place on the Louisiana list, none would have predicted its discovery in December, or in greater New Orleans, or in that sorry bombed-out excuse for a woodlot.

What a difference a year makes. Into the barren coastal landscapes that greeted counters in the wake of Hurricane "Katritra," nature poured her vacuum-abhorring energies. The year of the weed was followed by the winter of the sparrow. Where counters before the storms found forest birds, they were greeted with hordes of winter denizens of field and scrub, and they contented themselves with birding from the edges of impenetrable thickets of downed trees, brambles,

and saplings. My East Jetty territory on the Sabine CBC, which produced 452 individual land birds of 34 species during the 2005 CBC, produced 2555 individuals of 58 species. Of that total, 1961 were sparrows, with 1080 Swamp Sparrows leading the charge (compared to 42 Swamp Sparrows after Hurricane Rita!).

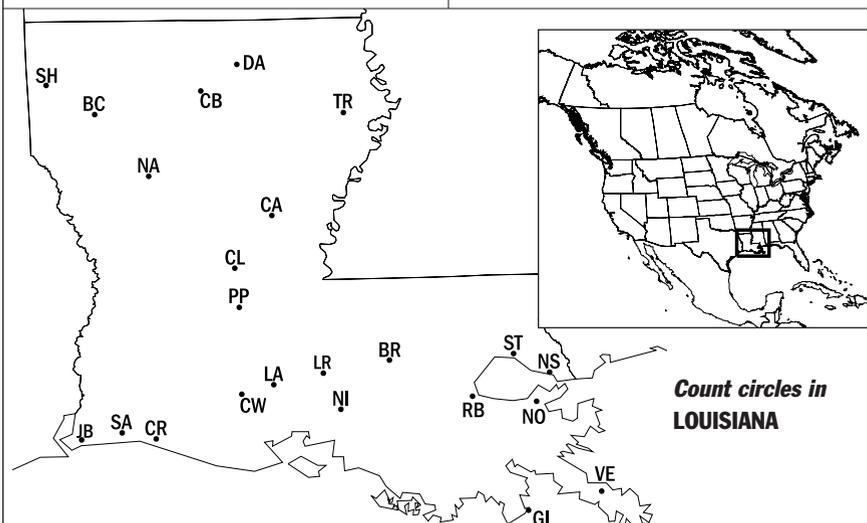
Still, the hurricane's effects on resident land birds remained evident. As an extreme example, at Venice near the mouth of the Mississippi River, which was completely overwashed by surge (no land was above water,) and where the few trees and buildings above the surge were slammed by Katrina's eye wall, only seven Red-bellied Woodpeckers, one Downy Woodpecker, one Loggerhead Shrike, two Blue Jays, one Carolina Chickadee, two Carolina Wrens, and thirteen Northern Cardinals greeted counters. One wonders if any of them were actual survivors.

Brown Creepers put on an impressive statewide show, with 145 found on 19 counts, perhaps highlighted by the seven at Venice. That a count could be conducted in Louisiana whereon creepers outnumbered jays more than three to one is astonishing. Golden-crowned Kinglets also flooded the state—no count missed them, and the statewide tally was 959. Other irruptives were less in evidence: only two Red-breasted Nuthatches on two counts; 16 Purple Finches on six counts; and, finally, four Pine Siskins on two counts. None of these species made it south of Baton Rouge, but that count won the trifecta by recording all three.



Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.
Photo/Pamela Morgan

Rarities on coastal counts included Crested Caracara and two Blue Grosbeaks at Johnson Bayou; Rose-breasted and Blue grosbeaks at Sabine; Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Ovenbird, and Chuckwill's-widow at Creole; three Reddish Egrets, three Wilson's Plovers, four American Oystercatchers, Red Knot, **Great Black-backed Gull**, four Sandwich Terns, a Burrowing Owl, both Chuckwill's-widow and **Whip-poor-will**, and a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Grand Isle; and a Lesser Black-backed Gull, *two Swainson's* and two Broad-winged hawks, seven Groove-billed Anis, a Black-throated Green Warbler, plus a staked-out heard-only Spotted Towhee at Venice. Other Yellow Warblers at Reserve and Baton Rouge were topped farther inland by a **Tennessee Warbler** at Crowley, highlighting the 14 warbler species found statewide. A Long-tailed Duck was a stake-out at St. Tammany. Neotropic Cormorant and Roseate Spoonbill, well east and well inland, respectively, brightened Baton Rouge. Four Common Ground-Doves were found in New Orleans. Least Flycatchers were found on Venice (along with an *Empidonax* sp.), at New Orleans, and well inland at Crowley. Only one Ash-throated Flycatcher was at New Orleans, but a *Myiarchus* at Butte La Rose was not described sufficiently well to be certain of identification. Five counts noted an unusual 10 Western Kingbirds, with a single at Lafayette the most unexpected. While the kingbirds were up, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher count was down, with only one at Venice. Crowley produced a **Bell's Vireo**. Summer Tanagers were at Baton Rouge, New Iberia, and North Shore. A Dickcissel was not too surprising



at Sabine, but one way up at Tensas was. There were six Indigo Buntings on four counts, two Painted Buntings on two counts, and an impressive 14 Baltimore Orioles on four counts. Yellow-headed Blackbirds were east at St. Tammany and well inland at Catahoula.

Statewide, 23 counts found 247 species and a below-average year for species diversity. Even with a small crew, Sabine rallied to resume its first place position, with a modest 158 species. With only skeletal crews covering the other Cameron Parish coastal counts, New Orleans at 150 species took second, while Crowley captured the title for a non-tidewater count with 145. Two north Louisiana counts, long-running Shreveport and Natchitoches, beat out Bossier-Caddo-Bienville to tie at 120 for north Louisiana honors.

NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA/ NEBRASKA/KANSAS/OKLAHOMA

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The weather this past season had a major impact on the birds and the birders in the central part of the United States. A number of snowstorms barreled out of the Rockies and dumped huge amounts of snow from the Dakotas to Texas. As a result, a number of counts were cancelled. One silver (as well as white) lining: the large amounts of precipitation did help to reduce the negative impacts of several years of drought in this part of the country. Additionally, the temperatures in December were quite mild, and a number of species lingered farther north than usual.

North Dakota observers completed 17 counts this year. The Garrison Dam count recorded 61 species, while the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks count had 59, for first and second place in the top total species category. A few Gyrfalcons showed up this year, and this species was recorded at Garrison Dam, Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Snowy Owls were seen on Atwood, Des Lacs NWR (3

birds), Garrison Dam, Grand Forks, Upper Souris, Long Lake, and Tewaukon NWR. Northern Saw-whet Owls were tallied on Garrison Dam, Grand Forks (count week), Icelandic State Park, and Medora. Fargo and Icelandic birders were able to locate Gray Jays on the count day, and the species was noted as a count week bird at Grand Forks. Bohemian Waxwings staged a modest invasion this season and were reported from Des Lacs, Fargo (count week), Garrison Dam, Grand Forks (count week), Hazen, Icelandic, and Minot. This was a very good year for redpolls: Commons were widespread and reported from 15 of the 17 counts, and Hoaries were seen at Des Lacs, Garrison Dam, Grand Forks, Hazen, Icelandic, Upper Souris, J. Clark Salyer, Long Lake, and Minot. Around the state, the following "better" birds were also noted: Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers in *both* Bismarck and Fargo, while Grand Forks (count week) and Jamestown also had Red-bellieds. A Brown Thrasher and Eastern Bluebird were found at Bismarck; Fargo had a Brown Thrasher as well. A late American White Pelican and Belted Kingfisher were reported from Garrison Dam, while Pine Grosbeak and Red Crossbill were seen at Icelandic. A Varied Thrush was a nice find at Upper Souris, and both Red and White-winged crossbills were found by Minot observers. On a sad note, Robert Randall, the longtime compiler of the Bismarck-Mandan count, passed away in early 2007. This season's count marked his 59th consecutive year as compiler for this count; his dedication, commitment, and kindness will be missed.

This year South Dakotans completed 15 counts. Pierre took first place honors with 68 species while Rapid City was a close second with 63. These two counts had some good birds, too. Pierre birders found six gull species, including Mew, Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed and Glaucous, while Rapid City reported both Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Northern Cardinal in count week. Both counts had single Northern Saw-whet



**Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), Fort Gibson Reservoir, Oklahoma.
Photo/Ken Williams**

Owls. A few Snowy Owls were scattered around the state at Brookings, Pierre (3 birds), and Waubay NWR. Irruptive passerine species were scattered statewide as well. Bohemian Waxwings were seen at Bison, Pierre, Shadehill, and Spearfish, and Red Crossbills were noted at Piedmont, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, and Sturgis. Participants found Evening Grosbeaks in Spearfish (count week) and Sturgis, and Common Redpolls were seen on the Bison, Huron, Pierre (count week), Sturgis, and Waubay counts. Finally, Shadehill counters found a Ferruginous Hawk and a Belted Kingfisher, and Sturgis produced Gray Jay (count week) and Cassin's Finch (count week), while Yankton had a nice waterfowl assortment.

Nebraska birders completed 11 counts this year, and Lake McConaughy's 90 species far outpaced the competition. This count recorded six gull species this year, including Thayer's (4 birds), Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous. A Snowy Owl was a nice find, as was a late Greater Yellowlegs and an Inca Dove; the dove was only the sixth Nebraska record for this southwestern species. Lake McConaughy birders also reported the only Common Redpolls found in the state this count season. The real "star" of this past season, however, had to be the winter adult Slaty-backed Gull that was reported on the Omaha count. The bird was on the Iowa side of the Missouri River at Lake Manawa and was present for some time, much to the delight of the many, many birders who flocked to see this cooperative individual. Elsewhere around the state, observers at Crawford reported Red Crossbills,