



**Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*), Duluth, Minnesota. Photo/Jim Lund**

count compared to last year. Included in this category are Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Purple Finch, Northern Hawk-Owl, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Gray Partridge, Long-tailed Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Northern Pintail, and Snow Goose.

Unfortunately, not all species were found in higher numbers this season. Aside from the waterbirds that we have already discussed, Eastern Screech-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Carolina Wren, Brown Creeper, Varied Thrush, European Starling, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, White-winged Crossbill, and Pine Siskin were both below their 20-year average and down from last year.

I would like to thank all the participants and compilers of the great state of Minnesota, for without them this census could not be performed. In addition, I would like to thank Roger Schroeder for coordinating the statewide effort as regional editor for the past seven years.

## IOWA

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The 2007–2008 Christmas Bird Count included 32 counts from Iowa, with Keokuk leading the way with a lofty 91 species. Other high counts this season included Burlington and Davenport (85), Clinton (82), and

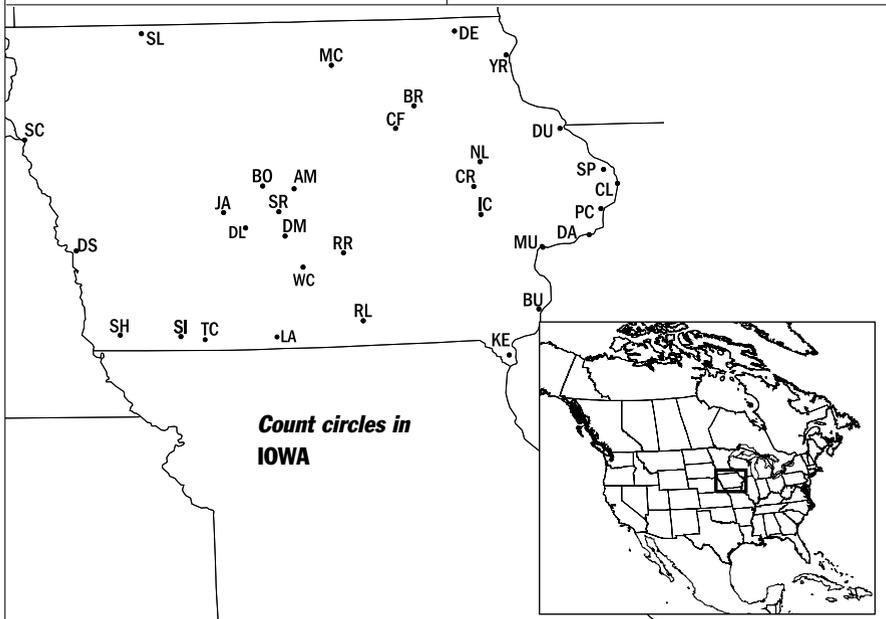
Princeton, Saylorville, and Rathbun (79). Winter came early and often this season; all counts reported snow cover, and four counts recorded depths of 8 to 10 inches. Weather conditions were often difficult, and the number of birds recorded was the second lowest in 10 years. However, the species total of 140 well exceeded the 133 species average and there were few misses.

Counters recorded a few pretty good birds this year. A Dunlin was found on the Keokuk count for only the second CBC record. A Virginia Rail was found on the Des Moines count by the same individual who had found the Keokuk Dunlin, but Iowa birders have come to expect as much from Steve Dinsmore. Virginia Rail had been recorded just twice before in the previous 20 CBCs. A Bohemian Waxwing was found at Burlington to cap what was a record high count for them. That species had been seen on just two of the previous 15 CBCs. A first-year Iceland Gull was photographed on the Red Rock count; this species has now been found during three of the last five CBCs and may only rate mention as a notable miss some count soon. This year's most notable miss was surely Ross's Goose, as it had been reported on 9 of the last 10 CBCs.

Waterfowl numbers were greatly reduced this season. Even the hardy Canada Geese were at their lowest number in seven years. Snow Geese were near

their lowest numbers ever. Trumpeter Swans were found in good numbers, but only six Tundra Swans were tallied, on the Davenport count. Mallards were found at less than half their average and Black Ducks were quite scarce. Divers fared generally better than puddle ducks. Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, and Common Mergansers were the most plentiful on the Mississippi counts and on the larger reservoirs. Buffleheads had their best showing in six years. Single Long-tailed Ducks were on four counts, but the only scoter was a White-winged at Cedar Falls-Waterloo.

The heavy snow forced Gray Partridge into the open. They had their third highest count since 1991–1992. Ring-necked Pheasants, Northern Bobwhite, and Wild Turkeys were also reported in high numbers. A lone Ruffed Grouse was at Decorah. Surprisingly, American White Pelicans were at a record high. Bald Eagles were found in record numbers, to the delight of lakefront developers everywhere. Single Northern Goshawks and Golden Eagles were reported from four counts. Five Peregrine Falcons represented a new record, but no Prairie Falcons were reported this year. Wilson's Snipes were found at possibly an all-time low. Ten Thayer's Gulls and Glaucous Gulls were reported. Single Lesser Black-backed Gulls were on two counts. Short-eared Owls had their best count in nine years



and Northern Saw-whet Owls were found in record numbers.

Woodpeckers were abundant, and even Red-headed Woodpeckers had a relatively high count. It was an incredible year for Northern Shrikes, two and a half times the previous high. Blue Jay numbers were near a record high. Horned Larks posted their best count in seven years. Red-breasted Nuthatches posted irruption numbers; 51 at Spirit Lake was a high count. Carolina Wrens were plentiful and Winter Wrens were also found in good numbers. Eastern Bluebird and Hermit Thrush numbers were well above average, but American Robins were relatively scarce. Northern Mockingbirds were nearly absent. Gray Catbirds were found on three counts and Brown Thrashers on two. Sparrows were tallied in good numbers; three Eastern and two Spotted towhees were reported, and White-throated Sparrows were found in numbers well above average. One Savannah Sparrow and five Lincoln's Sparrows were listed. Dark-eyed Juncos and Northern Cardinals were at record numbers. Lapland Longspurs were scarce, perhaps because of the harsh winter, yet Snow Buntings were plentiful. Icterids were a mixed bag; Red-winged Blackbirds were at their lowest numbers in seven years, while meadowlarks were found in record numbers. Brown-headed Cowbirds were also scarce. It was a good count for finches. Seven counts reported Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins were plentiful, and one Red and two White-winged crossbills were reported. Finally, Eurasian Tree Sparrows continue to expand slowly northward from their strongholds in southeast Iowa.

## MISSOURI

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After a significant snowstorm the first weekend of December, Missouri and much of the Midwest was hit with a record snowfall—just as the CBC season

began on December 15, a Saturday. Some Missouri counts were postponed, but 8 of the 26 counts were nevertheless completed on the first weekend. Despite four inches of snow accumulation on count day, Columbia managed to find 103 species, the high for the state. Overall, 147 species were found on the 26 counts, the highest number in the past eight years. In part, the species count was high on account of winter erratic species typically not found at all: Northern Saw-whet Owl, Northern Shrike, Red Crossbill, and Common Redpoll.

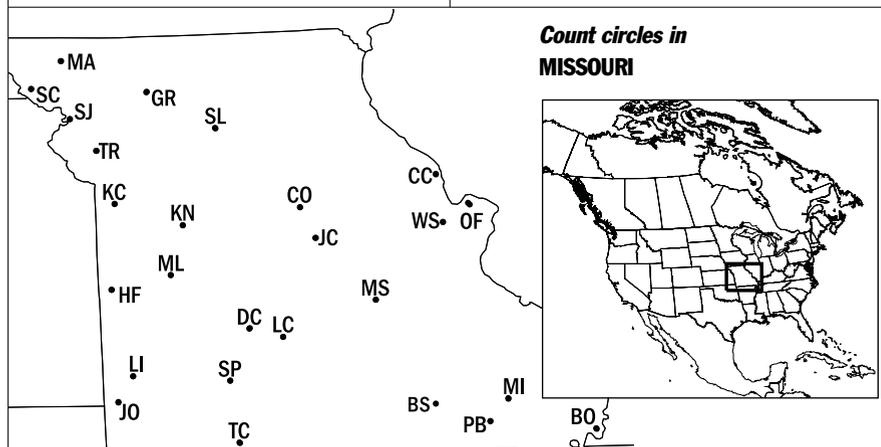
Highlights included two Tundra Swans at Columbia, one Great Egret at Montrose Lake, one Northern Goshawk at Maryville, two Prairie Falcons at Liberal, two Least Sandpipers at Columbia, one Dunlin at Big Oak Tree, one each Osprey and Greater Roadrunner in Taney County, one Northern Saw-whet Owl at Columbia, five Northern Shrikes at Grand River, one each Orange-crowned Warbler at Big Oak Tree and Jefferson City, Snow Buntings on four counts, one Dickcissel at Columbia, one Yellow-headed Blackbird at Squaw Creek, and one each Common Redpoll and Red Crossbill at St. Joseph.

Total numbers of Greater White-fronted and Snow geese were less than half normally recorded. Numbers of Trumpeter Swans from reintroduction programs to the north continue to increase, with 49 birds this year at Squaw Creek. Most ducks occurred in normal numbers, except Canvasback and Redhead, which were more abundant than usual, and Wood Duck and Northern Pintail, which were less abun-



**Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), Knob Noster, Missouri. Photo/Jeremy Abington**

dant than in the past several years. A record 15 counts were blessed with Eurasian Collared-Doves. A number of common species occurred in lower-than-normal numbers (using an eight-year average), ranging from 40 to 60 percent of normal (Great Horned Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Hermit Thrush, European Starling) to 60 to 80 percent (Mourning Dove, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Red-bellied and Downy woodpecker, chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow). Greater Prairie-Chicken, American Woodcock, and Gray Catbird were not observed on any count. For some of these species the low numbers may reflect poor observation conditions. Less than 3000 American Robins and 800 Cedar Waxwings were found in the whole state; however, these numbers must reflect low wintering populations. Sparrows occurred in normal numbers, but Pine Siskin (10 counts) and Lapland Longspurs (14 counts) were found on



more counts than usual. Other above-average common species were Killdeer, Horned Lark, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and American Pipit.

Despite the poor weather, people participation was normal, with 423 person-counts.

## ARKANSAS

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This season's weather was mild, with temperatures ranging from the 20s to the 50s. Only two counts had winds over 15 miles per hour; three counts had light rain and two had heavy rain. Only one count had fog all day. The biggest weather effect occurred the previous spring, in early April, when snow and freezing temperatures hit the upper half of the state. That inclement weather heavily impacted the white oaks, hickories, and soft mast trees and shrubs that were flowering, thus affecting where birds would be found much later in the year.

Resident species numbers appear average, but some species shifted out of forested areas to towns and cities, looking for food. Others had to shift from traditional quality foods to less desirable ones. It seems that resident bird health and body mass was therefore diminished.

The number of observers—384—was a 29-year high, but party hours were only up 9 percent above average. The number of individual birds (1,768,420) dropped 55 percent, while the overall number of species—164—was just shy of a record. In all, 21 counts participated, with 10 counts tallying more than 90 species, and Holla Bend N.W.R. set a new state species high of 127. Four counts set new highs: Jonesboro (78), Lonoke (112), North Fork of the Illinois Bayou (69), and Village Creek S.P. (75). North Fork of the Illinois Bayou had the most new species (6) and Holla Bend N.W.R. had the most new high counts (10).

There were several overall bird highlights for broad groups. Waterfowl and shorebirds set 28-year highs, while semi-hardy



**Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Little Rock, Arkansas. Photo/Robert H. Doster**

waterbirds and gulls were 200 percent above average. Raptors and grassland species showed small gains. Irruptives, semi-hardy lingerers, western species, and gamebirds were slightly below average. Blackbirds and frugivores showed a 60 percent decline.

As far as individual species, the only "missed" regular-occurring birds were Tundra Swan, "Kridler's" Red-tailed Hawk, wintering hummingbirds, and Palm Warbler.

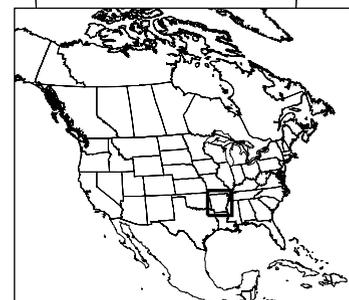
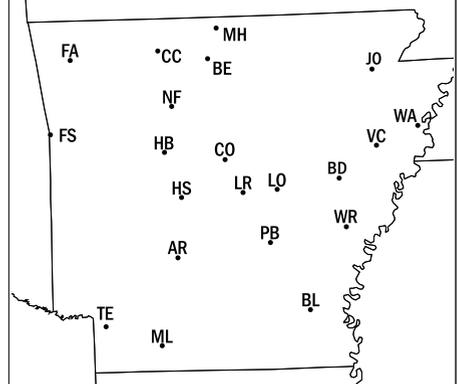
Setting new 24-year highs were Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine, Virginia Rail, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, American Pipit, Chipping Lark, and White-crowned sparrow. Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finch set 15- and 12-year highs, respectively.

American Woodcock, Eastern Screech-Owl, Pine Warbler, and Brewer's Blackbird tallied 29-year lows.

As always, a nice assortment of rarities was found. Species showing up at one count included Mute Swan at Mountain Home; Trumpeter Swan, Golden Eagle, Laughing and Lesser Black-backed gulls, Rock Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, and "Oregon" Junco at Holla Bend N.W.R.; Common Merganser at Magnolia-Lake Columbia; Anhinga, Black-crowned

Night-Heron, and Great-tailed Grackle at Texarkana; American Bittern at Pine Bluff; Surf Scoter and Green Heron at Big Lake N.W.R.; Rough-legged Hawk, Sandhill Crane, and Common Ground-Dove at White River N.W.R.; Sora at Fort Smith-Moffett; Long-eared Owl at Crooked Creek; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Hot Springs Village; and Spotted Towhee at Fayetteville. However, my nominees for **birds of the year** were the first Arkansas CBC **Pacific Loon** at Arkadelphia and **Red-necked Grebe** at Pine Bluff.

### Count circles in ARKANSAS





**Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Fayetteville, Arkansas. Photo/Jacque Brown**

In closing, all the compilers and observers—who put in 1056 hours worth of volunteer time this season—deserve a “Thank You!” for their hard work.

### LOUISIANA

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Louisiana observers conducted only 20 counts, the total hurt by the absence of two prime Cameron circles, and no count in Thibodaux. We amassed a paltry 1263 party hours, resulting in only 246 species, plus Monk Parakeet from the ever-expanding New Orleans population and a count week **Bell's Vireo** at Reserve.

Weather was generally good, with mild temperatures statewide. Rain did interrupt a few counts, but none were washouts. Bossier-Caddo-Bienville returned to preeminence in north Louisiana with 126 species. Non-tidewater honors went to Baton Rouge at 142, but no documentation was received for any of its

reported rarities. Unfortunately, Baton Rouge was not alone in its failure to provide documentation of rare birds. Sabine, of course, took top honors with 154, the only count to break 150, but the effects of Hurricane Rita, diminishing turnout by an aged band of counters (you know who you are), and the relentless expansion of “posted” signs make the prospect of that count’s return to the heady days of 190-plus species less and less likely.

The New Orleans count circle, continuing its recovery after Hurricane Katrina, posted a respectable 148 species and came in second statewide. But some recognition for Venice, our most devastated count circle, is merited: despite heavy rain in the morning, only four observers in two parties, and a measly 18 party hours, it still posted 124 species, including the usual array of stellar rarities. Topping the list for that count, and the state, was the first fully documented winter **Scarlet Tanager** for Louisiana, and one of the few for North America. Other very noteworthy rarities statewide included a (presumed) **Vaux's Swift**, a first for the St. Tammany count; **Say's Phoebes** (continuing an excellent fall) at Catahoula and Crowley; a **Tropical Parula** at Lafayette; an “**Audubon's**” **Warbler** at Grand Isle that remained into late April; an astonishing **three Black-throated Gray Warblers** at Venice and one at Johnson Bayou; and a **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Sabine.

In the “birds of yesteryear” department, I note the report of two American Black Ducks at D'Arbonne without any

special notation attached. Obviously, this species has declined throughout its range, and Louisiana has always been on the periphery of that range. Northeast Louisiana, where the D'Arbonne count is located, is the closest part of the state to the heart of the species' range (it also hosts large numbers of Mallards), and used to regularly host small numbers of black ducks. But the area has relatively few birders, and to those of us in the rest of the state the status of black ducks there remains mysterious. (Hint, hint.) Another “bird of yesteryear” has to be Northern Bobwhite: two individuals on two counts. Other declining species put in better appearances: Common Ground-Doves made a good inland showing, with two at Crowley and six up at Tensas, as well as six at Reserve; Groove-billed Anis had singles at New Orleans and Sabine, and 11 at Venice. Purple Finches actually staged an invasion, with 55 on nine counts. Indeed, it was a good year for irruptives generally: 55 Red-breasted Nuthatches on 11 counts; 86 Brown Creepers on 16 counts; 69 Winter Wrens on 14 counts; 340 Golden-crowned Kinglets on 18 counts; and 3095 Cedar Waxwings on 16 counts; but there were only six Pine Siskins on two counts.

Well-documented Broad-winged Hawks were along the coast—three at Venice and one each Grand Isle and Sabine. Single Least Flycatchers were all coastal at Johnson Bayou, Sabine, and Venice. Seventeen species of warbler made for an above-average season. Counters found an average number of Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo and Painted buntings, Summer Tanagers, and Baltimore Orioles. Unusually, though, no Chuck-will's-widow turned up on any count.

### NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA/NEBRASKA/KANSAS/OKLAHOMA

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The weather this past winter was generally mild and snow-free in the northern Great Plains states. Snow and

