

Count circles in ILLINOIS



injured Green Heron. Northern Goshawks were only reported from Meredosia Island (1), Newton (1), and Schapville (1). Golden Eagles at Forest Glen (1), Horseshoe Lake (1), and Warbluff (1) were noteworthy. Five Merlins were noted statewide: Cypress Creek (1), Joliet (1), Lisle Arboretum (2), and Morris-Wilmington (1). Thirty-five Sandhill Cranes were detected at McHenry, eight were at Joliet, but the two at Newton were very far south. Pere-Marquette noted a **Spotted Sandpiper** (in Missouri). The northernmost Least Sandpiper was detected at Hennepin (1); Newton (28), Pere Marquette (21), and Rend Lake (3) were lucky enough to detect this lingering shorebird as well. Newton also recorded three Dunlin. Bird Haven detected the only American Woodcock. Collinsville noted an Iceland Gull. Carlyle Lake (1), Collinsville (1), Kishwaukee (2), and Rend Lake (1) noted Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Four Great Black-backed Gulls were at Calumet Sand-Ridge. The rarest dove was the **Common Ground-Dove**

(under review by the records committee) noted at Crane Lake-Sangamon. Eighteen Long-eared Owls (in 9 circles) and eight Northern Saw-whet Owls (in 7 circles) were the result of persistent owling and scouting. Two Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers at Union and Horseshoe Lake were noteworthy for this rare form in our state. Hardy Eastern Phoebe (in 6 extreme southern Illinois circles) perform the only fly-catching in early winter. Remarkable was Clinton Lake's **Tree Swallow**. Two **Varied Thrushes** were noted: one at Calumet Sand-Ridge, the other at Bloomington-Normal. Solitary Marsh Wrens were tallied at Baldwin Lake-Kaskaskia, Cypress Creek, and the northernmost at Kankakee Valley. A well-documented **Bohemian Waxwing** appeared at Chillicothe. Unusual warblers were almost undetected. Noteworthy were seven Pine Warblers, at Carlyle Lake (1), Cypress Creek (1), Mermet Lake (1), and Rend Lake (4). The only Orange-crowned Warbler was noted at Rend Lake. One Spotted

Towhee was noted at Lake Mermet. A very well documented Chipping Sparrow was noted at Kishwaukee. Vesper Sparrows were noted at Arklands (1) and Mermet Lake (1). A **Henslow's Sparrow** at Carlyle Lake (if accepted by the records committee) would be the first state CBC record since 1965. A well-documented **Dickcissel**—the first since 1984—was noted at Union County. A well documented—and this season's only—Western Meadowlark was detected by call notes at Horseshoe Lake. Thus we need *not* assume that all meadowlarks are Eastern in our state in winter. Carlyle Lake reported the only Brewer's Blackbird. Bloomington (4), Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge (60), Chicago Urban (5), and Crane-Lake Sangamon (20) noted Red Crossbills in central Illinois. After a long hiatus (10 years), Evening Grosbeaks finally showed up on a count—a paltry five at Forest Glen.

Based on data points and compiler comments, there are certain species that seem to be expanding or increasing in numbers statewide during early winter: Hooded Merganser (1226 in 39 circles), Turkey Vulture (451 in 19 circles), Cooper's Hawk (265 in 55 circles), Ring-billed Gull (101,732 in 56 circles), Eurasian Collared-Dove (246 in 19 circles), Mourning Dove (20,330 in 59 circles), Red-bellied Woodpecker (2946 in 57 circles), Eastern Bluebird (2037 in 47 circles), Northern Mockingbird (574 in 32 circles), White-throated Sparrow (5792 in 55 circles), American Goldfinch (11,126 in 59 circles), and Eurasian Tree Sparrow (2444 in 14 circles).

Winter resident species that appeared in good numbers included Rough-legged Hawk (61 in 25 circles), American Tree Sparrow (11,081 in 59 circles), Dark-eyed Junco (22,919, plus 5 "Oregon Juncos," in 59 circles), Lapland Longspur (1369 in 20 circles), and Purple Finch (532 in 49 circles).

A few species that are now being reported in low numbers include Long-tailed Duck (5 in 2 Lake Michigan count circles), Ring-necked Pheasant

(373 in 27 circles), Red-headed Woodpecker (525 in 40 circles), and Loggerhead Shrike (24 in 13 circles).

Birds that got away, seen only during count week, included: **Mottled Duck** (present for some time), Harlequin Duck, Red-throated and Pacific loons, California Gull, and White-winged Crossbill. (Then, there was that **Inca Dove** one-and-a-half blocks outside a circle. It's a shame—they didn't count!)

This CBC obsession continues—thank you all for your participation!

MINNESOTA

Roger Schroeder

215 Rainbow Drive

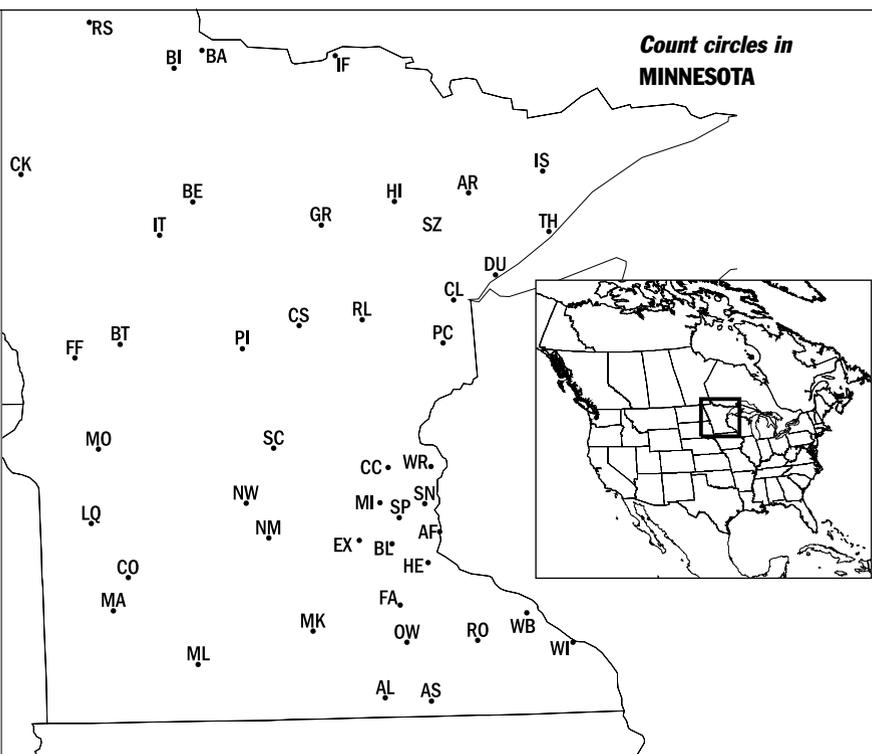
Marshall, MN 56258

cbc@robair.com

Once in a Lifetime: Minnesota's winter of 2004-'05 has the probability of being *most* remembered for the astounding invasion of **Great Gray Owl** and **Northern Hawk Owl** species. Jo Blanich, who has coordinated the Crosby CBC since its inception in 1967, commented that she has "never seen any Great Gray Owl invasion like this one." Residents within the Sax-Zim CBC area made similar statements. A total of 18 Northern Hawk Owls and 106 Great Gray Owls were tallied, each species reported on five individual Minnesota CBCs for the *first time*. Reports included a Northern Hawk Owl on the Lac qui Parle CBC, about 150 miles (as the owl flies) farther southwest than the area usually considered to be the southwestern extent of its winter range. (See the accompanying map showing the Northern Hawk-Owl's winter range and the location of the Lac qui Parle CBC.)



The suspected cause of this major owl irruption—the lack of small rodents—was supported by the Department of Natural Resource (DNR) small rodent survey at Norris Camp Peatland Science



and Nature Area, which is within the Beltrami Island CBC. The DNR noted a near total absence of small rodents at this location, and the only owl species observed in this area during the count period was a Barred Owl.

The Cackling Bird Gets Added to the List: Adapting the old "squeaky wheel" cliché to a certain subspecies of Canada Goose that just happened to cackle enough to get itself split from *Branta canadensis* last year, Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) was added to Minnesota's composite CBC list in its first year as a new species. This goose-by-another-name still smells so... well... never mind. Cackling Goose was counted on seven CBCs totaling 75 individuals, and has several compilers wondering which "new" species will be added next year as a result of *splitting hairs*.

Soooooo Close: Minnesota CBC participants turned up at least two (or three?) new species for the Minnesota composite CBC list. Although it was anticipated that Cackling Goose would turn up on at least one CBC this season, the **Green Heron** observed on the Excelsior count was entirely unexpected! Those two species bumped the Minnesota composite list to 199 count day species. We came dangerously close

to reaching 200 from the observation of a *Pheuticus* sp. on the St. Paul (north) CBC. First reported as a first-year male Black-headed Grosbeak, circumstances dictated that the St. Paul (north) compiler make the unpopular, but wise, decision to report this individual at the genus level. But wait... 200 may still be reached as review is pending on an Osprey reported from the Wild River CBC. An accomplished observer made the observation, however the details submitted at the time of this writing were not conclusive enough. Keep your fingers crossed.

Best of the Rest: Aside from the species already mentioned, several observations of interest included **10** Greater Scaup (Duluth), Barrow's Goldeneye (Afton and Hasting-Etter), Red-necked Grebe (Duluth), Mute Swan (Afton, Faribault, and Rochester), Sandhill Crane (Faribault), **4** Wilson's Snipe (Bloomington, Excelsior, and St. Paul-Northeast), Three-toed Woodpecker (Beltrami Island), Carolina Wren (Austin, St. Paul [northeast suburban]), Townsend's Solitaire (Lac qui Parle), Boreal Chickadee (Aurora, Beltrami Island, and 12 at Isabella), Tufted Titmouse (Rochester, and 12 at Winona), Chipping Sparrow (Austin), Vesper

Sparrow (Northwest McLeod), Fox Sparrow (St. Paul, north), and Brown-headed Cowbird (Hastings-Etter).

Thanks again to the best crew of CBCers in the nation!

IOWA

Chris Caster

4 South Ridge Court

Coralville, IA 52241

cjcaster@earthlink.net

The 2004–2005 CBC included 29 counts from Iowa. The Keokuk count in southeast Iowa led the way for the fifth straight year, with 87 species. Other counts along the Mississippi followed: Burlington (75), Muscatine (74), Clinton (73), and Green Island (73). Sioux City (67) led the Missouri River counts. Spirit Lake (61) had the high count in the northern third, Saylorville (67) in the middle third, and Rathbun (68) in the southern third. It is no coincidence that high counts were associated with major rivers and reservoirs as there was a lack of both snow cover and open water across most of the state. The earliest counts saw temperatures above freezing, but temps plunged to single digits on December 19, and this continued until the end of the month, when temperatures neared 60 degrees. The temps returned to single digits for the January counts.

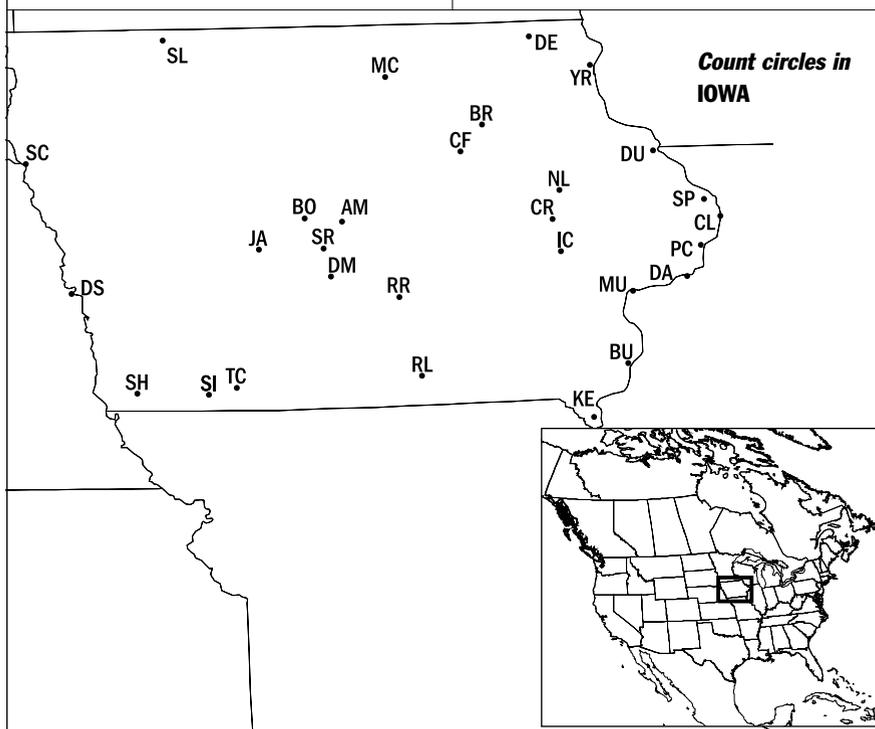
A number of unusual species were reported this count season. A first ever Fish Crow was reported on the Muscatine count, and documentation was sent to the Illinois records committee. A Great Egret on the Saylorville count was believed to be a first winter record for the state. Sandhill Cranes were reported for only the second time, five at Green Island and two at Princeton. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found at Saylorville and Keokuk. An adult Black-legged Kittiwake was also at Keokuk. An Iceland Gull was reported at Muscatine. A Snowy Owl was at Iowa City in an unprecedented season, when all four northern owls made appearances in the state. A Prairie Falcon was at Des Moines and another count week bird was at Spirit Lake. An American Pipit in Cedar Rapids was only the third CBC record for that species. A Black-crowned Night-Heron again wintered at Cedar Rapids. A Townsend Solitaire at DeSoto and a count week Varied Thrush at Iowa City were also notable.

Waterfowl numbers were mixed, and timing favored large numbers on a few counts. Canada Geese were found in numbers nearly double their 10-year average, but Snow Geese numbers were relatively low. Twelve Greater White-fronted Geese was a fairly high number.

Thanks to the efforts of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program, Trumpeter Swans (48) were reported in record numbers from around the state. A record number of Tundra Swans (857) were all found on the Clinton count. Neither dabblers nor divers were numerous. Most species totals were at about half their 10-year averages. Only Greater Scaup (43) were more numerous than usual. Canvasbacks (5207) were the most numerous of the divers, with 3000 at Clinton and 2200 at Keokuk. The only sea ducks were one Surf Scoter and two Black Scoters at Keokuk, a count week Black Scoter at Spirit Lake, two Long-tailed Ducks at Clinton, and one at Saylorville.

Gallinaceous birds were down, but a record number of Wild Turkeys were found, mostly on Missouri River counts. American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, and Great Blue Herons were all found in above average numbers. Bald Eagles (2854) were found in near record numbers. Golden Eagle (8) and Merlin (11) had record totals. Wilson's Snipes were found at a seven-year low. A record number of Ring-billed Gulls were found on the strength of 30,000 at Red Rock and 9000 at Saylorville. The Herring Gull count was the highest in nine years. A record 14 Thayer's Gulls and five Glaucous Gulls were found. Eurasian Collared-Doves posted their third consecutive record high. Of the owls, only Long-eared Owls were at above average numbers. Great Horned Owls (133) were at their lowest number in 20 years.

Woodpeckers were found in average numbers, but Red-headed Woodpeckers had their lowest count in five years. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (27) were at near record numbers. It was an average year for Northern Shrikes, but only three Loggerhead Shrikes were reported. Blue Jay numbers were well below average, while American Crow numbers rebounded to average numbers. Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice both had their worst counts in 19 years. Counts of 76 Carolina and 37 Winter



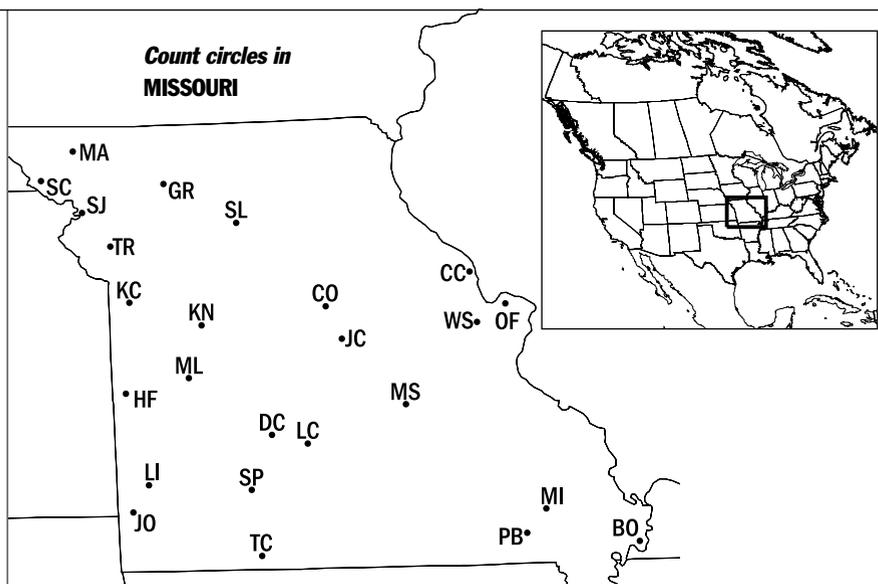
wrens were strong totals. A single Marsh Wren was at Keokuk. Eastern Bluebird and Hermit Thrush were both found in high numbers. More than 3800 American Robins at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge alone was outstanding. One Gray Catbird was found on the Siam-Hopkins count in Missouri. Six Northern Mockingbirds were a record high. Cedar Waxwings were down slightly. All sparrow numbers were down. Two Eastern Towhees were reported. Harris's Sparrows neared a record low. Fourteen Field Sparrows on the Shenandoah count was notable. Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings were difficult to find without snow cover. Icterids were below average, therefore 223 Rusty Blackbirds at twice their 10-year average was notable. Forty Western Meadowlarks identified by call at Saylorville and 40 Great-tailed Grackles at Sioux City were notable. Purple Finches were below average, while House Finches neared record numbers. Common Redpolls were nearly absent, but Pine Siskins were widespread across the northern half of the state. No crossbills or grosbeaks were reported. Eurasian Tree Sparrows (689) continue to increase in eastern Iowa. A count of 326 at Muscatine was impressive. Four birds at Princeton and two at Iowa City currently mark their expansion.

MISSOURI

Randy L. Korotev
800 Oakbrook Lane
St. Louis, MO 63132
rlk@levee.wustl.edu

Precipitation was normal over most of the state but below normal (less than an inch) in the northwest during December. A major storm dropped 5–14 inches of snow on the southeastern part of the state on December 22. Across the state temperatures averaged 1.5–3 degrees above normal in December, except they were slightly below normal in the southeast after the snowstorm. A cold snap on December 25 resulted in below zero temperatures in portions of the southeast.

Hardy migrant species occurring on Missouri's 25 CBCs included American



White Pelican (reported on 5 counts), Turkey Vulture (7), American Coot (13), Wilson's Snipe (7), Belted Kingfisher (20), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (22), Eastern Phoebe (8), Marsh Wren (3), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (16), Hermit Thrush (13), Brown Thrasher (12), Yellow-rumped Warbler (17), and Field Sparrow (15). Twenty-seven species of waterfowl were recorded, including 570,000 Snow Geese on 17 counts, 37 Ross's Geese on six counts, and 234 Cackling Geese on 10 counts. Numbers of both diurnal and nocturnal raptors were normal. The most unusual reports were one Long-tailed Duck (Squaw Creek), one Rufous Hummingbird (Joplin), one Blue-headed Vireo, one Mountain Bluebird (Big Oak Tree), and one Nashville Warbler (Montrose Lake). All of these reports represent documented sightings under evaluation by the Missouri Bird Records Committee.

Winter irruptive species were scarce; for example, only two Common Redpolls were observed (St. Joseph), Pine Siskins appeared on only seven counts, and only 211 Lapland Longspurs were reported (8 counts). Numbers of some species for which the 40-year trend has been negative (Northern Bobwhite, Loggerhead Shrike) were about normal compared with the past 10 years. House Finch numbers were about the same as they have been for the past six years. Range-expanding Great-tailed Grackles were

observed on four counts, and Eurasian Collared-Doves on eight counts.

Missouri CBC observers found 147 species of birds, a bit greater than normal. Horton-Four Rivers had the highest species total (101), with Mingo (100) and Columbia (96) coming in second and third, respectively. A total of 335 people participated, many of whom did several counts for a total of 393 person-counts.

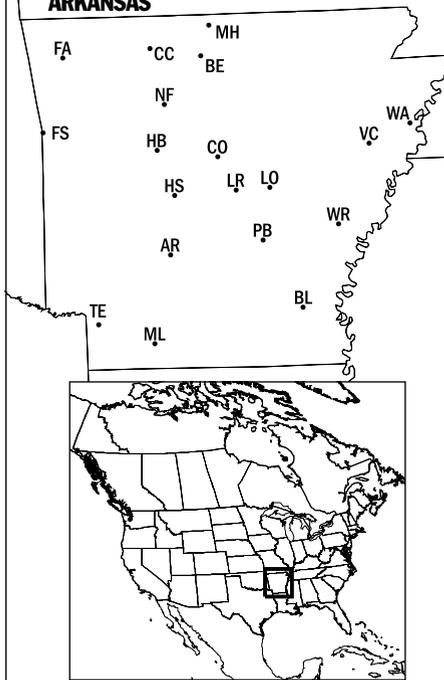
ARKANSAS

Leif E. Anderson
P.O. Box 195
Hector, AR 72843
leanderson@fs.fed.us

The weather in Arkansas was mild until two days before the count period when a cold snap swept across the northern tier. The weather took a break for the first weekend, then settled into the largest snowstorm of the year. Water levels were better than in the past two years, until later in the count period when snowmelt created flooding.

Several observers commented on the cold snap that appeared to push birds out of the northern tier. The water levels were good for ducks, but low snow depths to the north appeared to keep numbers low here in the state. Once the snows did occur, it appears that the ducks headed for warmer climates, not being found in Arkansas in large numbers. High water levels along the Arkansas River created excellent conditions for gulls. However,

**Count circles in
ARKANSAS**



the flooding created access problems later in the count period.

Observers on 19 counts found 149 species across the region, with 405,206 individuals. Ten counts managed to make it over 90 species; Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge led with 120 species. Fort Smith-Moffett had the highest number of individuals, with 76,440. At least four counts set new species highs.

Four counts found the newly recognized Cackling Goose. Surely it was present in the state before this year, but not well documented. Puzzling was the fact that five counts reported high numbers of Gadwall and American Wigeon, while also reporting lower than normal numbers of Mallard. Crooked Creek Valley had the treat of tallying higher than normal numbers of all their normally occurring raptor species. Discouraging news was no Merlin or Peregrines in the region. Encouragingly, several counts reported higher than normal numbers for crows. The West Nile virus outbreak doesn't appear to be as bad this year—at least for the location that hosted these wintering crows during the breeding season.

Fort Smith-Moffett had the only showing of rails, with two species. Shorebird numbers were better than average across the region, with Lonoke in

the lead tallying seven species. Water levels along the Arkansas River created great gull habitat, with more than 19,000 individuals of five species. The best gull was a count week Thayer's. Short-eared Owl numbers were very low, at two birds.

Semi-hardy lingerers put on an excellent show, with eight species present on 12 counts. Arkadelphia had 10 Orange-crowned warblers, but the bird of the year has to be a beautifully photographed **Summer Tanager** at Fayetteville. Irruptive species were found in low numbers, except Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finches, which were above average. Twelve counts had irruptives, with a nice showing of 33 Purple Finches at Buffalo National River (east).

As always, the compilers and the volunteers, who put in 1109 hours, deserve a thank you for continuing the longest running bird database in the country. I hope you had some fun while contributing to the database! This is my first year as regional editor and I'm still learning. I plan to better represent your hard-earned efforts in the future. Thank you.

LOUISIANA

David P. Muth

Jean Lafitte NHP and Preserve

419 Decatur Street

New Orleans, LA 70130

David_muth@nps.gov

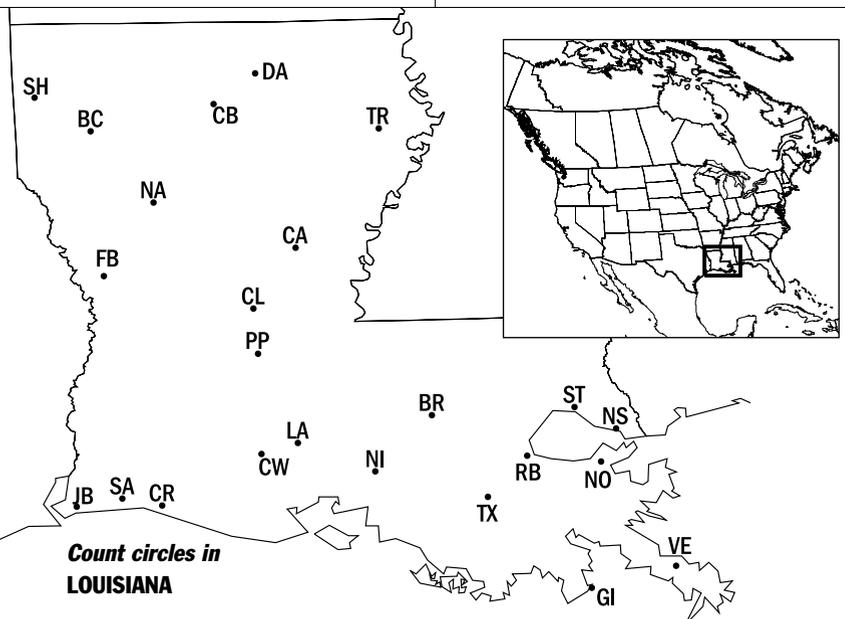
Twenty-four counts recorded another lackluster 251 species during their cen-

sus days, tying last year's number, plus count week Long-tailed Duck at New Orleans, and Monk Parakeets in New Orleans and presumably feral Canada Geese on several counts. Lacassine was silent, but Grand Isle and Crowley were back, and two counts debuted: Claiborne and Fort Polk.

Sabine rebounded to 187 species and a commanding lead over New Orleans, which ended in a very unaccustomed second place at 159. Northshore and St. Tammany tied at 150, followed by the non-tidewater leader, a returning Crowley at 149. Bossier-Caddo-Bienville once again led north Louisiana counts with 130.

Weather was not a serious factor on any of the counts, except that New Orleans was actually able to report snow depth. (Heh, there was still snow in the deepest shade.)

The only scoters were single Surfs at New Orleans and Sabine. Four Reddish Egrets made the list at Grand Isle. **Swainson's Hawks**, once super-rare December birds, were videotaped at both ends of the coast, Sabine and Venice. The only **Broad-winged** was also at Venice, where almost annual. A **Least Bittern** at Venice and **Purple Gallinules** at Creole and Sabine enlivened marsh birding. Two **American Oystercatchers** at Grand Isle, rare there at any time, were unexpected CBC period birds (no count circle encompasses their restricted range). Nineteen Piping



**Count circles in
LOUISIANA**

Plovers were recorded from the four counts with beaches. At Sabine they were joined by five Wilson's Plovers, where now annual; more unexpected Wilson's were at Johnsons Bayou and Grand Isle. A **California Gull** at Sabine slightly outshone **Great Black-backed** and **Glaucous** at Grand Isle. A **Common Tern** was a good find at St. Tammany—they were missed at Sabine, their traditional winter stronghold. Common Ground-Doves made a very good showing—24 on five counts. Groove-billed Anis showed in New Orleans and Grand Isle, but were missed at Venice. A **Lesser Nighthawk** at Sabine was exceptional, as was a **Bell's Vireo**. The only Chuck-will's-widows were at Johnsons Bayou.

The best vagrant was a **Say's Phoebe** unexpectedly inland at Catahoula. There were seven **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers**, six where almost expected at Venice, but one in a class with the Say's way up at Natchitoches. A "**Western**" **Flycatcher** at Venice was quite noteworthy; the only other *Empidonax* was a Least at Crowley. It was a slow year for *Myiarchus* flycatchers, with a single member of the genus reported from New Orleans. Only one Western Kingbird was located, at Reserve. Sixteen species of warbler were recorded statewide, led by a very unexpected male **Hooded Warbler** at Sabine. A **Summer Tanager** at Northshore was outclassed by a hardier bird up in Shreveport. The only **Spotted Towhee** was at Creole. Who would have predicted that the lone **Lapland Longspur** for the count would be way down in New Orleans? Must have come with the snow... A **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Lafayette plus **Rose-breasted**s at Sabine and Reserve were good finds. There was only one Blue Grosbeak, at Baton Rouge, but six and nine Indigo and Painted buntings, respectively, and Crowley once again produced multiple Dickcissels, with 12. Baton Rouge had five Baltimore Orioles at feeders—no others were reported.

Eighteen Red-breasted Nuthatches on eight counts constituted an invasion, as

did 108 Purple Finches on 11 counts, and 138 Pine Siskins on five counts.

As in the past two years, I looked for trends that might show the effects of West Nile virus. Great Horned Owl statewide numbered 80, or 0.05 birds per party hour (b/ph), near the prior to West Nile virus 10-year average of 0.049 birds b/ph. Red-tailed Hawk totaled 906 birds statewide, 0.58 b/ph, near the prior 10-year record low (0.57 in 1999). American Crows totaled 6315 statewide, 4.04 b/ph, well below the prior 10-year average of 6.20 b/ph, and, like the previous year, a new record low.

NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA/ NEBRASKA/KANSAS/OKLAHOMA

Sebastian T. Patti

552 West Belden Avenue

Chicago, IL 60614

sebastianpatti@hotmail.com

Except for an extremely cold period right after the first of the year, this past winter was extraordinarily mild throughout the Midwest; precipitation was also below normal. This combination resulted in much water remaining open, and many bird species lingering later than usual in the Central Plains states. Additionally, it was a very good year for northern "invading" species, and the Midwest had its fair share of downright rarities.

North Dakotans participated in 20 counts that were submitted to Audubon this year. Leading the pack was Garrison Dam with 60 species, while Grand Forks tallied 55. At the other end of the spectrum, Lake Ilo counters recorded only six species, and they had to brave temperatures that ranged from minus 36 degrees F to a high of minus 25 degrees! This was a good year for irruptive species, as well as northern invaders. Generally, Bohemian Waxwing (reported on 9 counts), Red Crossbill (4 counts), White-winged Crossbill (only at Icelandic State Park), Purple Finch (8 counts), and Common Redpoll (16 counts) were distributed around the state. Hoary Redpolls were found at Des Lacs, Garrison Dam, Grand Forks, and

Mayville, and this was a very good year for Pine Grosbeaks. The grosbeaks were reported from Des Lacs, Garrison Dam, and Icelandic State Park (SP). Oh, and then the "goodies." Grand Forks counters reported Great Gray Owl (count week, the first in the state in many, many years) and Northern Hawk Owl (with surprisingly few details) among six owl species that included Snowy. Snowy Owls were also present at Des Lacs, Jamestown, Long Lake, and Minot. Late waterfowl included the American Wigeon and Canvasback at Bismarck-Mandan, Trumpeter Swan and Canvasback at Fargo-Moorhead, another American Wigeon at Garrison Dam, Green-winged Teal at Grand Forks, Tundra Swan at Minot, and yet another American Wigeon spotted on the Upper Souris count. Lingering Great Blue Herons were located at both Garrison Dam and Jamestown, while Garrison also reported a Black-legged Kittiwake. The only Gyrfalcons this year were found at Jamestown (count week) and Lake Ilo (also count week). The Clark's Nutcracker at Icelandic SP, the Brown Thrashers at both Fargo and Grand Forks, and the Varied Thrush and Northern Mockingbird located at Mayville-Portland were good finds, too.

South Dakota participants submitted 16 counts this year, with Pierre reporting an impressive 70 species to take first place in the total species category. Among the better birds reported from that count were Thayer's and Glaucous gulls and Black-legged Kittiwake. Elsewhere, Lake Andes counters reported Glaucous and California gulls. Other species of interest this year included the



Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*), Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, North Dakota-Minnesota. Photo/Dave Lambeth