

Illinois & Indiana



Kenneth J. Brock

1265 Red Bud Drive
 Chesterton, Indiana 46304
 (kj.brock@comcast.net)
 (kebrock@iun.edu)

A cool and wet spring season was punctuated by a few warm days—a fairly typical pattern for the Midwest. May weather proved especially frustrating to many birders, as the airflow was dominated by easterly winds, which foiled those anticipating spring fallouts. Most correspondents judged the migration to be somewhat late but otherwise normal or even better than the norm. Perhaps Doug Stotz most aptly captured the sentiment about the season with his assessment that “the spring was above average, but in a funny way.”

It was clearly a spring of contrasts.

Despite the lateness of the flight, there was a flurry of early arrivals. Additionally, almost every correspondent lamented the dearth of a few species. However, others often reported unusually high counts of these same birds, clearly illustrating the heterogeneous nature of migration. One consistent theme was the scarcity of several *Catharus* thrushes, which were reported in low numbers across the Region.

Indiana observers endeavored to learn more about spring longshore flights on Lake Michigan by regularly manning the Indiana Dunes State Park “Green Tower.” In this effort, the Green Tower—a large water tank atop a tall dune that provides an excellent vantage point with both lake and inland vistas—became a household phrase for Hoosier birders.

Abbreviations: Carl. L. (Carlyle L., s. IL); I.B.S.P. (Illinois Beach S.P., Lake); D.S.P. (Indiana Dunes S.P., Porter lakefront); L. Cal. (L. Calumet, s. Chicago); Chau. (Chautauqua N.W.R., IL); Jax. P. (Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront); Montrose (Montrose

Harbor, Lincoln Park, Chicago, Cook); T.N.C.K.S. (The Nature Conservancy Kankakee Sands wetland, Newton, IN).

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

An unprecedented 26 Red-throated Loons were reported on the Indiana lakefront, including a group of 8 off Beverly Shores 21 Apr (BJG), and 10 were off D.S.P. 4 May (BJG, JKC, JJM, KJB). On the Illinois lakefront, singles were reported at Montrose 3 & 5 Apr (GAW) and at Highland Park 21 Apr (DRD). The only inland Red-throated was at Stephen Forbes S.P., IL 29 & 31 Mar (TUM, KAM). An alternate-plumaged Pacific Loon was discovered at Beverly Shores on the evening of 14 May (BJG) and lingered for two days (JJM, ph. MT, RHe, †KJB, m. ob.). It was an unusually good spring for Red-necked Grebes, with 7 in Indiana and 4 in Illinois. All occurred as singletons except for 2 at Brookville Res., IN 19 Apr (MK). Eared Grebes were also more plentiful than normal, with 8 in Illinois and 2 in Indiana. The Midwest's American White Pelican population continues to prosper. In addition to several quadruple- and many triple-digit tallies in the Mississippi R. valley, unprecedented numbers wandered into ne. Illinois, with 500+ in the Palos area and Orland Park, Cook, IL 1 Apr (WSS) and 450–500 at Will, IL 29 Mar (CA). In nw. Indiana, a record count was established 8 Apr when 52 were found at Willow Slough W.M.A. (SD). Double-crested Cormorants performed even better: an astronomical count of 17,000 came from Rend L., IL 7 Apr. (KAM).

It was an encouraging spring for American Bitterns, with 29 reported in Illinois and 9 in Indiana. In contrast, Least Bitterns fared poorly, with modest reports from Indiana and “poor numbers” in Illinois (KAM). The peak Snowy Egret tally was 27 in St. Clair, IL 4 May (FH), and 3 wandered into Indiana, where this species is casual in spring. Single Tricolored Herons were reported at L. Monroe, IN 10–11 May (JD, †DRW, ph. SHv et al.) and at Homer L., Champaign, IL 18 (Jason Ebaugh, *vide* TAM; James O. Smith, *vide* EJC), 20, & 21 May (ph. TAM, SDB). By far the season's largest Black-crowned Night-Heron tally consisted of 641 counted during an evening dispersal at L. Cal. 10 May (WJM, AK). The Region's only ibis was a White-faced seen at Clear L., Mason, IL 3–5 Apr (RGB, SNB, KR, ph., †TAM). Most unexpected was a Black Vulture identified in the Indiana Dunes 17 Mar (Bobbie Atzhorn), which provided the first local record since 1953.

WATERFOWL

The ever-expanding Greater White-fronted Goose population yielded an impressive 3442 birds at Chau. 13 Mar (RGB, SNB). Additionally, 300,000 Snow Geese were at

SA Has the West Nile Virus impacted the Midwestern Indiana Red-tailed Hawk population? Data from the Indiana Dunes spring hawk flight may shed some light on this question. The season's Red-tailed total was 57.5% below mean annual counts from the past 15 years. This *buteo*, which is normally the most abundant raptor in spring flights, was recorded in lower numbers than the Sharp-shinned Hawk (normally the second-most abundant species recorded). The season's average flight rate of 4.8 Red-taileds per observation hour was also the lowest ever recorded (roughly half the hourly rate observed over the past 15 years). It remains to be seen whether these localized data can be linked with a decline in the Red-tailed Hawk population and, too, whether such a decline might be linked to West Nile or some other disease agent.

Carl. L. 13 Feb and 6 Mar (KAM, DMK). Ross's Goose numbers also remained high, with 24 in Illinois and 2 in Indiana. Puddle ducks appeared in typical numbers. The only rarities consisted of a male Cinnamon Teal at Horseshoe L., Madison, IL 28 Apr (SC, FH, DMK) and Cinnamon Teal x Blue-winged Teal hybrids at Carl. L. 6 Apr (DMK) and Kingsbury W.M.A., IN 10 Apr (JJM). Except for Greater Scaup, which was scarce, bay ducks also occurred in average numbers.

It was a fine spring for Harlequin Ducks. On the Indiana lakefront, an ad. male was seen off the Commonwealth Edison power plant 1 Mar (JJM, SBa, JKC, EMH et al.); one appeared on the Chicago River's North Branch on the same day (AFS, R&KF, MBC, GAW); and a female was seen from the D.S.P. Green Tower 15 Mar (JKC, BJG, EMH, JJM, RP). Following the normal pattern, small numbers of scoters were scattered across the Region. Peak tallies included 24 Surfs at L. Monroe, IN 29 Apr (DRW et al.), 6 White-wingeds at Winthrop Harbor, IL 5 Apr (DTW), and 2 female Blacks at the Port of Indiana 22 Mar (JJM, SBa, JKC, m. ob.). No sizeable Long-tailed Duck counts were made on L. Michigan; the largest tally consisted of 7 at Winthrop Harbor, IL 5 Apr (DTW). The best inland Long-tailed report was of 4 at Rend L., IL 26 Mar (KAM, CJL). The peak Ruddy Duck count consisted of 3000 at Carl. L. 15 & 30 Mar (DMK).

KITES THROUGH CRANES

Within their normal s. Illinois range, Mississippi Kites appeared in unprecedented numbers, with 83 counted in Alexander (65 at Thebes and 18 near Horseshoe L. Conservation Area) 24 May (SLD, SDB), 75 in Alexander on the same day (KAM), and 52 at Thebes 9 May (no observer attribution). Extralimital reports included a single at Palos Forest Preserve, Cook, IL (WSS, CA), 2 at Bruce Wildlife W.M.A., Moultrie, IL 9 May (†TAM), one in Brown, IN 11 May (JHv, SHv et al.), and a first-

year bird at Ft. Harrison S.P., Marion, IN 19 May (†DG). Once again, the main Broad-winged Hawk flight circumnavigated the Region. This spring's maximum count was 75 birds at the D.S.P. hawkwatch 30 Apr (BJG). A light-morph ad. Swainson's Hawk soared over D.S.P. 19 Apr (JJM, †JKC, BJG, RP, DG). Remarkably, the bird appeared just two minutes after a Chicago Ornithological Society field trip, led by Bill Clark, arrived at the hawkwatch.

The Hoosier bird of the season was an imm. gray-morph Gyrfalcon that was seen sporadically at Kankakee W.M.A., Starke, IN over a period of about two weeks. It was discovered 22 Mar (BJG) and lingered through the 25th (JJM, ph. DG, EMH, †Haw, LP et al.). Excellent photographs were obtained, making this Indiana's first confirmed record. Toward the month's end, the bird disappeared, only to resurface for one day 5 Apr (JJM).

It was an above-average spring for the

cryptic Yellow Rail, with four reports in Illinois and one in Indiana. Also quite encouraging were the 5 King Rails reported in Illinois and 3 in Indiana. A record spring count of 6350 Sandhill Cranes was logged at L. Cal. 16 Mar (WJM), and the ne. Indiana Sandhill breeding range expanded into Elkhart this spring, with a nest at Boot Lake Preserve (JKC, DSt).

SHOREBIRDS

Leading the pack for shorebird-of-the-season honors was the Snowy Plover at Meredosia L., Morgan, IL 27–28 Apr (Bill Atwood, *fide* †TAM, ph.). The season's only Piping Plover appeared at Miller Beach, IN 10 May (MT). In addition to a half-dozen Black-necked Stilts at established s. Illinois sites, 2 ranged n. to Chau. 15 May (RGS, SNB), and another was at Spring L. near Savannah 17 Apr–3 May (Ted Harms, m. ob., *fide* SDB). Two were also found 21 May in Greene, IN (†DRW, DWi, ph. LSt), where this species remains casual. American Avocets were unusually

scarce, with only two reports: 17 were at Montrose 28 Apr (GAW), and 7 were a Chicago's Grant Park 6 May (TSS). A state record-high 135 Willets was counted at L. Monroe, IN 1 May (DRW, JHv, SHv et al.). An impressive 17 Whimbrels at I.B.S.P. 16 May (KAM) provided the season's only report. Hudsonian Godwit reports included

one in Moultrie, IL 9 May (TAM), another in Brown, IL 12 May (HDB, PW, VMK et al.), and a flock of 10 at T.N.C.K.S. 14 May (SAP). Largest of the Region's four Marbled Godwit reports was 21 seen at Waukegan 5 May (AFS, DD). The early-arriving shorebirds this season included: a flock of 15 Pectoral Sandpipers in Moultrie, IL 8 Mar (TAM); an overzealous Baird's Sandpiper at Kankakee W.M.A., IN 29 Mar (JKC, ph. SBa, RP, KJB); a record-early Stilt Sandpiper at Carl. L. 30 Mar (DMK); and a Wilson's Phalarope in Spencer, IN 21 Mar (†DA), the state's first Mar record. Indiana's 4th



An alternate-plumaged adult Pacific Loon was photographed 15 May 2003 at Beverly Shores, Indiana on Lake Michigan. Found the previous day by Brendan Grube, it represents one of very few records of breeding-plumaged birds for the state. Photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.



These are two of three American White Pelican present 7 April 2003 at Willow Slough Federal Wildlife Area's J. C. Murphy Lake. The next day, the number had grown to a state-record 52 birds. Photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.

spring Buff-breasted Sandpiper record was logged 4 May in *Monroe* (†DRW). For the 2nd consecutive year, Wilson's Phalaropes were reasonably plentiful, with 12 in Indiana and 7 in Illinois. Red-necked Phalaropes remained scarce, with a pair at Goose Lake W.M.A., IL 24 May (Berdeau H. Twait) and one in *Madison*, IL 25–27 May (DMK) constituting the only reports.

GULLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Laughing Gulls continued their Regional expansion, with 12 in Illinois and 3 in Indiana. The Indiana lakefront's first Little Gull in three years (a first-year bird) flew past the D.S.P. Green Tower during a 14 Apr longshore flight watch (JMc). Some 50,000 Ring-billed Gulls were at Carl. L. 2 Mar (KAM), and a 12 May survey of nesting colonies at the East Chicago, IN steel mills yielded 43,265 nests that contained eggs or chicks (JSC et al.). Latest records of four-year gulls included: 2 Thayer's, one Iceland, and an ad. Glaucous at Winthrop Harbor 3 May (AFS); a Lesser Black-backed at Carl. L. 17–18 May (DMK); and a first-year Lesser Black-backed at Montrose 18 May (AFS). This spring, a D.N.R. survey revealed that Caspian Terns again nested at the East Chicago, IN steel mills: a 27 May count revealed 146 nests, many containing up to 3 chicks (JSC). This spring, Common Terns were more prevalent than normal; the peak tally was 1000 at Waukegon 15 May (KAM). Also quite impressive was a count of 80 Least Terns at an inland se. *Massac*, IL site 31 May (VMK). Black Terns peaked at Carl. L. 13 May, when 65 were counted (KAM).

The unrelenting Eurasian Collared-Dove expansion provided reports from 11 Illinois and 4 Indiana sites. The White-winged Dove invasion also continued, with a flyby at the D.S.P. Green Tower 2

Apr (†EPo) and another at Chicago's Soldier Field 13 May (†DFS, †TSS, DEW, GAW). On Chicago's s. side, Monk Parakeets strengthened their stronghold, with 125 birds, plus 28 huge nests, observed at



A male Harlequin Duck was found 3 March 2003 in Hammond, Indiana on Lake Michigan, where rare.
Photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.

Burnham, Cook 15 Mar (WJM). Two Monk Parakeets were also observed at Carl. L. 12 Apr (DMM), and a nest was found there 19 Apr (KAM). It was an excellent spring for cuckoos, with numerous reports, including peak counts of 4 Black-billeds at Fort Wayne, IN 16 May (RPR) and a mind-boggling 74 Yellow-billeds in sw. *Union*, IL 10 May (VMK, MBo), plus a nocturnal flight of 64 near Jonesboro, *Union*, IL on the same date (SDB). The latter tallies constitute the 2nd and 3rd highest counts for the state (*vide* PRC).

Northern Saw-whet Owl reports were restricted to singles at the Montrose Magic Hedge 20 Mar (BWH, GAW) and a fresh road-kill found at West Beach, IN 22 Mar (KJB et al.). A record count of 27 calling Chuck-will's-widows was made at Ferne Clyffe S.P., IL 8 May (SDB). Unusual in spring, an ad. male Rufous Hummingbird was in rural *Lee*, IL 20–22 Apr (Allen & Pat Yener-

ich, ph., †James E. Hampson). A longshore Yellow-bellied Sapsucker flight at I.B.S.P. 5 Apr yielded a state record 115+ birds (DTW); the previous maximum was only 36 (*vide* PRC).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Noteworthy flycatcher maxima included 3 Olive-sideds at Morton Arboretum, IL 26 May (WJM, JA), 32 Eastern Wood-Pewees in the n. *Lake*, IN migrant traps 20 May (JJM et al.), 12 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in the n. *Lake*, IN migrant traps 20 May (JKC et al.), 18 Willows in *Green*, IN 25 May (LSt), 39 Leasts in the n. *Lake*, IN migrant traps 20 May (KJB et al.), and 46 Great Cresteds in *Union*, IL 10 May (VMK, MBo). Western Kingbirds were restricted to *Madison*, IL, where the peak tally of 5 was logged at Granite City 29 May (FH). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers continue to appear in s. Illinois. Spring reports included a male 8 & 11 May in *Jackson* (VMK et al.) and a pair in *Union* 10 May (David Fletcher, *vide* VMK). Impressive vireo counts included 46 White-eyeds in *Union*, IL 10 May (SDB) and a phenomenal 52 Bell's in *Greene*

and *Sullivan*, IN 17 May (LSt). Among the early-arriving vireos was a Warbling that appeared in *Boone*, IL 20 Apr (AEB, MAR). The most impressive corvid reports involved Fish Crows. Two extralimital birds were seen and heard at L. *Monroe*, IN 26 Apr–9 May (JHv, SHv); if documentation is accepted, these will provide the state's first record away from the Ohio R. In addition, a remarkable 150 Fish Crows were counted at East St. Louis, IL 24 Mar (KAM).

At mid-day on 11 May, a massive longshore reverse migration of swallows was observed at Chicago's Gillson Park. An extrapolation of observed flight rates over the entire day, produced a rough estimate of 60,000 swallows (WSS). A highlight for Chicago lakefront birders was a Bewick's Wren at Montrose 6 Apr (JS, †GAW, EWW, AFS et al.). The only other Bewick's report came from *Adams*, IL, where one was found 30 Apr (KAM). Several correspondents suggested that both the House and Winter Wren flights were weak. Interestingly, the latter species was observed building a nest in *Boone*, IL 18–19 Apr and 8 May (DTW). Incredibly, a Townsend's Solitaire was seen flying past the Indiana D.S.P. Green Tower on three different occasions. The first sighting occurred 8 Mar, when one flew e. past the Green Tower (BJG). A week later, 15 Mar, presumably the same bird made a repeat performance (BJG, †JKC, JJM, RP); and the final appearance occurred 24 Mar (†KJB).

Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, and Hermit Thrushes' numbers remained distressingly low. A superb Gray Catbird count of 119



A juvenile gray-morph Gyr Falcon was documented 22 March (here 23 March) to 5 April 2003 at Kankakee Federal Wildlife Area, Indiana, a first state record.
Digital photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.

birds was recorded at Jax. P 10 May (PRC et al.), and a record-early American Pipit arrived at Brandon Lock & Dam, Will, IL 22 Feb (AFS). The season's peak Cedar Waxwing flight involved a longshore flight of 3239 at the D.S.P. Green Tower 28 May (JKC et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The season's "marquee" warblers included a female Kirtland's Warbler at D.S.P. 10 May (†LHi et al.) and a singing Swainson's Warbler in Jackson, IL 6 May (†FKB, found by Vicki Lang several days earlier). Noteworthy among the score of early-arriving warblers were: a female Northern Parula 3 Apr in Du Page, IL (UG); a singing male Black-throated Green 2 Apr in Chicago's Lincoln Park (BWH, GAW et al.); a male Blackburnian 20 Apr in Cook, IL (DFS); a Yellow-throated 1 Apr in De Kalb (DJS); a male Blackpoll 21 Apr at Wolf L., IN (JJM, ph.); a Palm at the Morton Arboretum 1 Apr (MBC); a Black-and-white at Carl. L. 16 Mar (DMK); a Prothonotary 6 Apr in Massac, IL (KAM, CT); a Mourning 20 Apr in Jefferson, IN (JDW); and a Hooded 10 Apr at Fox Island Park, IN (RPR). Large daily tallies included a longshore flight of 2570 Yellow-rumped Warblers at the D.S.P. Green Tower 28 Apr (JJM et al.), a flock of 12 Pine Warblers feeding on the ground at Wolf L., IN 21 Apr (JJM ph.), 67 Kentucky Warblers in Union, IL 10 May (SDB), 33 Worm-eating Warblers in Union, IL 10 May (SDB), and 22 Canadas on the Indiana lake-front 25 May (BJG). On the down side, several observers reported a decline in Cerulean Warbler numbers.

Although Stotz deemed Clay-colored Sparrows woefully scarce in Chicago's Grant Park, they were widespread and plentiful elsewhere. Overzealous Lark Sparrows arrived in Jo Daviess, IL 10 Apr (DTW) and Cook, IL 11 Apr (JCB) to establish new n. Illinois early-arrival dates. An early Le Conte's Sparrow appeared in Glenview, Cook, IL 23 Mar (John Koch, *file* EWW). Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows were decidedly scarce, with only one report in the Region: 17 May in Chicago's Lincoln Park (m. ob., *file* EWW). It was a good spring for Lincoln's Sparrows,

with an early arrival in Chicago's Grant Park 4 Apr (DFS) and a peak tally of 53 in Jax. P. 10 May (SLC et al.). An impressive 1380 White-throated Sparrows 1 May in Chicago's



This Tricolored Heron was photographed 20 May 2003 at Homer Lake, Champaign County, Illinois. This species seemed to be on the move north through the interior of the continent this spring. Photograph by Travis Mahon.

Grant Park (DFS) provided a record count for Illinois. Harris's Sparrows were confined to Illinois, where 3 were reported. Peak longspur counts included 1000 Laplands in McLean, IL 30 Mar (MLR) and 200 Smith's in Montgomery, IN 14 Apr (CCM). Few Snow Buntings were reported; the peak count was 50 in St. Joseph, IN 3 Mar



This Snowy Plover was photographed 28 April 2003 at Meredosia Lake, Morgan County, Illinois. This constitutes the fifth Illinois spring record; all spring birds have been found within the two-week interval 27 April to 11 May. Photograph by Travis Mahon.

(M&VR), and a straggler was at Montrose 21 Mar (GAW). Imm. male Blue Grosbeak overflights produced singletons at Jax. P. 27 Apr (SLC) and near Chesterton, IN 10 May

(†RP). Peak Indigo Bunting tallies included 331 in Union, IL 10 May (SDB) and 282 at the D.S.P. Green Tower on the same date (JJM et al.). Ad. and first-year male Painted

Buntings were observed at the traditional East St. Louis site 21, 22, & 25 May (DMM, KAM, CJL, FH). An impressive 29 Orchard Orioles, counted in Union 10 May (SDB), provided the 2nd highest Illinois spring count (*file* PRC). As expected, winter finches were virtually nonexistent; the feeble Regional totals included 7 Purple Finches and 2 Pine Siskins.

Contributors (sub-regional editors in bold-face): Cindy Alberico, Jill Anderson, David Ayer, Susan Bagby (SBa), Steven D. Bailey, Frank K. Bennett, Richard G. Bjorklund, Sigurd N. Bjorklund, H. David Bohlen, Michael Bowers (MBo), Arlene E. Brei,

Kenneth J. Brock, Joan C. Bruchman, **Alan W. Bruner** (Indiana), Scott L. Carpenter, Lee A. Casebere, John K. Cassady, John S. Castrale, Melinda Born Chapman, Elizabeth J. Chato, Shawn Clubb, **Paul R. Clyne** (Illinois), Donald R. Dann, Sheryl L. DeVore, Danny Diaz, Steve Doud, Jerry Downs, Robert E. & Karen Fisher (R & KF), Urs Geiser, Don Gorney, Brendan J. Grube, Jim Haw (Haw), Roger Hedge (RHe), Jim Hengeveld (JHv), Susan Hengeveld (SHv), Brian W. Herriott, Frank Holmes, Edward M. Hopkins, Dan M. Kassebaum, Vernon M. Kleen, Allison Klement, Matt Klostermann, Craig J. Litteken, Travis A. Mahan, Walter J. Marcisz, Thomas U. May, Jeffrey J. McCoy, Keith A. McMullen, Clint C. Murray, Randy Pals, Steve A. Pancol, Larry Peavler, Marjory A. Rand, Roger P. Rang, Michael L. Retter, Kevin Richmond, Marge and Vic Riemenschneider (M & VR), Thomas S. Schulenberg, Wesley S. Serafin, Darrell J. Shambaugh, Alan F. Stokie, Dan Stoltzfus (DSt), Douglas F. Stotz, Jeff Sundberg, Craig Thayer, Michael Topp, Eric W. Walters, Patrick Ward, J. Dan Webster, Donald R. Whitehead, David E. Willard, Daniel T. Williams, Jr., Geoff A. Williamson, Donald Winslow (DWi). Many other observers contributed to the state lists but could not be personally acknowledged herein; all observers are much appreciated. ●