

Illinois & Indiana



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Overall, the spring of 2004 was quite warm, indeed 4.2° F above average in Chicago. As is typical in the Midwest, however, the weather was not uniform across the two states. Although March was generally warm, early April and parts of May were cool. April was also quite dry, but heavy rains and strong winds ushered out the end of May. Several correspondents believed that the heavy precipitation of late May boded well for nesting species. Walter Marcisz noted that Yellow-headed Blackbird's preferred nesting habitats were replenished, while Lee Sterrenburg opined that the lush vegetative cover benefited grassland species as well. High moisture levels, along with a cicada emergence across

much of the Region, may produce an interesting breeding season.

Despite a plethora of early dates, the songbird flight was generally deemed late, with below-par numbers for most transient species (though resident passerines were plentiful). In northeastern Indiana, a semi-quantitative measure of the spring flight was provided by Jim Haw's observations of Neotropical migrants at Fox Island Park: only 35% were above their 24-year means.

After serving as the Indiana subregional editor for 15 years, Alan W. Bruner is stepping down. His pithy analyses and insightful summaries will be sorely missed. Thanks for the many years of work, Alan.

Abbreviations: Carl. L. (Carlyle L., s. Illinois); D.S.P. (Indiana Dunes S.P., Porter lakefront); L. Cal. (L. Calumet, s. Chicago); Chau. (Chataqua N.W.R., Mason, IL); Jax. P. (Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront); L. Gibs. (L. Gibson, sw. Indiana); Montrose (Montrose Harbor, Lincoln Park, Chicago, Cook) T.N.C.K.S. (The Nature Conservancy Kankakee Sands wetland, Newton, IN).

LOONS THROUGH IBIS

The Indiana lakefront maintained a monopoly on Red-throated Loons this spring: an unprecedented 51 were observed, with a maximum of 11 off D.S.P. 16 Apr (JJM). Single Pacific Loons were reported in Union, IL 18 Apr (KAM) and off Beverly Shores, IN 24 Apr (BJG, JJM). The season's only Red-necked Grebes were at Elk Grove Village, IL 1 Apr (AA, R&KF) and Carson Slough, Kane, IL 18 Apr (EES). Other grebe observations included a typical Eared flight, with 6 in Illinois and one in Indiana and the Region's first spring Western Grebe in two years in Boone, IL 8 May (AEB). One of the season's surprises was an imm. Brown Pelican, which was discovered at Eagle Creek Park, IN 16 May (LPv) but appeared irregularly at that site through the period (PBG, ph., †CH, m.ob.). There seems no upper limit for Double-crested Cormorants. This spring's peak count was a whopping 20,000 at Rend L., IL 12 Apr (KAM).

Most encouragingly, the American Bittern population appears on the increase, with robust totals of 44 in Illinois and 40 in Indiana. The most impressive single report consisted of an exceptional 15 American Bitterns at Oakwood Bottoms, Jackson, IL 24 Apr (TAM, SDB et al.), which is likely a state record. Least Bittern numbers also improved over last spring, with 11 reported in each state. The 170 Great Egrets observed in Cook, IL 8 May (GAW) constitutes an excellent tally for this n. locale. Single Tricolored Herons were reported at the Chicago Botanic Garden (John Koch, m.ob., *vide* EWW) and at Wolf L., IN (BJG, ph. JJM), both 23 May. On 8 May, 431 Black-crowned Night-Herons were counted at the established L. Cal. rookery (WJM). It was an excellent spring for White-faced Ibis in Illinois, with 8 in Douglas, IL 6 May (EWW) and 3 at Heppopin-Hopper W.M.A., Putnam, IL 8 May (TSS, MSh, DFS et al.), with at least one remaining there through the period.

WATERFOWL

The expanding goose population leveled off this spring; maximum counts were only 800 Greater White-fronted Geese at Hennepin-Hopper L., Putnam, IL 12 Mar (DFS), 10,000 Snow Geese at two Illinois locations (KAM), and 3 Ross's Geese in Boone, IN 21-24 Mar (RLH et al.). An impressive Tundra Swan report of 94 birds was logged at Chau. 26 Mar (RGB, SNB). Spring puddle duck numbers were generally modest. Noteworthy maxima included 3408 Gadwall at Chau. 16 Apr (RGB, SNB), 1500 American Wigeon at Hennepin-Hopper L. 23 Mar (DFS), and 15,000 Northern Shovelers at Carl. L. 6 Mar (DMK, TAM). The most interesting dabbling consisted of a well-documented male Mottled Duck stud-

ied on L. Springfield, *Sangamon*, IL 21–30 May (ph. †HDB, ph. TAM, KAM, m.ob.), a potential first for the Region.

Except for a remarkable inland count of 183 Greater Scaup in *Steuben*, IN 15 Mar (JJM) and 10,000 Lesser Scaup along the Mississippi R. from *Carroll* to *Rock Island*, IL 17 Mar (JCp), bay ducks were reported in typical numbers. Crème de la crème of the diving duck season was the female Tufted Duck at the Buffalo Sewage Lagoons, *Sangamon*, IL 15–19 Mar (ph., †HDB, ph. TAM, SDB, KAM, m.ob.). This is the 5th Illinois Tufted Duck and the first in more than two decades; it is also the first inland record (*fide* HDB). Two Harlequin Ducks were reported: an ad. male at Jax. P. 3 & 13 Mar (PRC, SLC) and the past winter's female reported in *Rock Island*, IL through 12 Apr (SF). Among scoters, Surf was most prevalent, with 12 reported in Illinois and 22 on the Indiana lakefront. The other two scoters were decidedly scarce; the only White-winged consisted of up to 2 at Lock & Dam #14, *Rock Island*, IL 10–21 Mar (SF). A first-winter male Black Scoter at East Fork L., IL 7–29 Mar (LH) provided the season's only report of the species. The Region's peak Long-tailed Duck tally, 45 recorded off West Beach, IN 25 Mar (JJM), constituted the highest spring count for the Indiana lakefront in 40 years. In Illinois, nesting Hooded Mergansers, a rare breeding duck, were found in *Jackson*, IL on the early date of 18 Apr (4 young; KAM); a brood of 11 was recorded at Chau. 14 May (RGB, SNB); and 2 females plus 9 young were seen in *Jersey*, IL 14 May (UG). The peak Ruddy Duck tally was a hefty 2100 at Horseshoe L., *Madison*, IL 29 Mar (KAM).

HAWKS THROUGH CRANES

Numerous reports suggest that the Region's Mississippi Kite population is flourishing. Extralimital singletons appeared at Carl. L. 8 May (DMK, MSF) and in *Greene*, IN 28 May (†LWS, DSe). Northern Goshawks were excruciatingly scarce; the Region's only report was at Carl. L. 28 Mar (DMK).

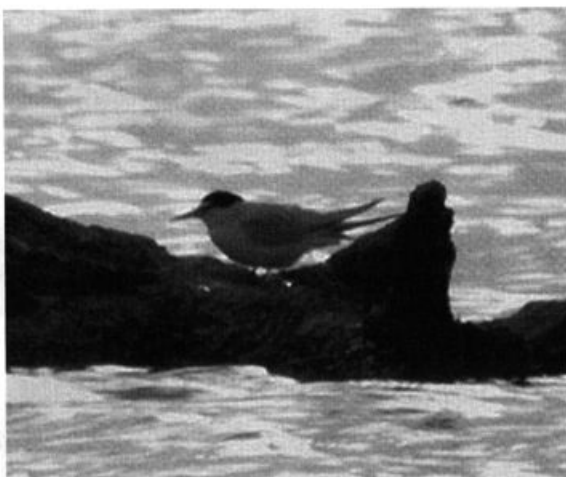
Assorted peak daily counts at the D.S.P. hawkwatch included 6 Osprey 25 Apr (BJG), 52 Sharp-shinned 28 Apr (JKC), 38 Broad-winged 18 Apr (WSS), and 144 Red-tailed 27 Mar (JKC). The Region's maximum Rough-legged Hawk tally consisted of 14 in *Greene*, IN 14 Mar (LWS, DSe); 3 late migrants were also at D.S.P. 6 May (JJM, KJB). Unusual Red-tailed Hawks included a Harlan's in *Winnebago*, IL 4 Apr

(DTW), a rufous morph in *Steuben*, IN 15 Mar (JJM), a Krider's in *Pulaski*, IL 20 Mar (KAM), and 3 dark morphs at the D.S.P. hawkwatch in late Mar. The season total of 15 Merlins was a bit above normal for the Region.

Greater Prairie-Chickens were reported only from Prairie Ridge State N. A. in Illinois, where the peak count was 18 males 10 Apr (MAH), but 9 males and 8 females were also observed there 4 Apr (MAH). The maximum Wild Turkey count, among numerous reports, consisted of 57 in *Jo Daviess*, IL 6 Mar (EWW). It was a good spring for Northern Bobwhite. In s. Illinois, for example, calling birds were heard frequently in *McDonough* and *Fulton*, where this species had almost disappeared (LLH). Noteworthy among the three Yellow Rail reports was one found dead at Chicago's McCormick Place 17 Apr (*DEW). King Rail numbers remained encouraging, with 8 in Illinois and one in Indiana. The peak Sora count was 49 in *Tipppecanoe*, IN 3 May (JBD). The Region's only Purple Gallinule report consisted of one that washed up on the Jax. P. beach on the exceptionally early date of 5 Mar (*SLC). The flight of 5420 Sandhill Cranes over Palos, IL 22 Mar (WSS) was quite impressive.

SHOREBIRDS

Although the American Golden-Plover flight was strong in s. Illinois, where four-



This stray Least Tern lingered at Lake Lemon, Indiana 20–23 April 2004 to provide an early arrival date for the state. Photograph by Susan Hengeveld.

digit counts were logged four times, this species was scarce in Indiana. Highlights of the shorebird flight were Illinois's 6th and 7th Snowy Plovers, both of which were reportedly photographed. The first Snowy was at Montrose 3 May (TSS, MSh, RDH, GAW, m.ob.), and another appeared at Bellrose Refuge, *Pulaski* 7–9 May (SDB, AS). Piping Plovers staged an above-average flight, with at least 9 in Illinois and 4 in In-



A casual species in Indiana, this Tricolored Heron was seen at Wolf Lake 23 May 2004, a first for the Indiana lakefront. Photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.

diana; the peak count consisted of an exceptional 9 at Montrose 2 May (GAW). The Region's Black-necked Stilt population is thriving. More than 20 birds were noted in Illinois and at least 6, including a record-early bird at Grand Kankakee Marsh, *Lake* 10 Apr (SRB et al.), were in Indiana. Ten American Avocets in inland *Winnebago*, IL 7 May (DTW) made the Region's highest count of the season.

Noteworthy shorebird maxima included: a state record 1120 Lesser Yellowlegs at Grand Kankakee Marsh, IN 30 Apr (JJM), 3 Hudsonian Godwits at Montrose 21 May (GAW, KAM et al.), 4 Marbled Godwits at L. Monroe, IN 19 Apr (DD, SRE, MCl, ph. JL), 2500 Pectoral Sandpipers at Carl. L. 12 Apr (DMK), and 3 Red-necked Phalaropes at Grand Kankakee Marsh, IN 3 Jun (BJG). In addition, an extremely early Semipalmated Sandpiper arrived at Carl. L. 18 Apr (TAM, DMK), with 6 more at L. Gibs. on the same day (G&LB). The latter constitutes an all-time early arrival date. Spring Baird's Sandpipers are casual in Indiana; consequently, the reports of 2 in *Orange* 21 Apr (LPv et al.) and one at L. Lemon 20–21 Apr (JHv, SHv) are most noteworthy.

GULLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

As noted in earlier reports, a single ad. Laughing Gull has frequented a Kentucky Fried Chicken parking lot on Chicago's s. side for several years. This spring on 5–6 May an apparent ad. Laughing Gull x Ring-billed Gull hybrid was observed at this site (†WJM). Other noteworthy gull reports included a first-winter Little Gull in *Richland*, IL 2 Apr (LH) and a very tardy Thayer's Gull in *Wilmette*, IL 15 May (SGM), which provided one of few May records of this species. Vanguard of a fine Caspian Tern

flight was a record-early bird at Wolf L., IL 27 Mar (CAM). A sizeable, but brief, Common Tern flight was observed on the Indiana lakefront 8 May, when 558 were counted off Beverly Shores (JJM). The only extralimital Least Tern report consisted of a record-early bird at L. Lemon, IN 20–23 Apr (JHv, ph. SHv). It was an above-average spring for Black Terns; the peak tally was 60 at Horseshoe L., *Madison*, IL 14 May (FRH).

The Eurasian Collared-Dove expansion continued unabated, with numerous reports, including nesting, in both Illinois and Indiana. A White-winged Dove in Whiting, IN 25 Apr (†KJB, ph. JKC, ph. JJM, BJG, EMH) provided Indiana's 6th record in the past seven years. Bumper Yellow-billed Cuckoo counts might have been related to the cicada emergence; these will be summarized in the Nesting Season report. Highest tallies of the "eared owls" included 7 Long-eareds at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, IL 23 Mar (RHi, GJ, SDB) and 27 Short-eareds in *Greene*, IN 14 Mar (LWS, DSe). National Lakeshore ornithologist Ralph Grundel saw a phenomenally early Common Nighthawk 25 Mar at the Indiana Dunes headquarters. A fine count of 49 Whip-poor-wills was logged in n. *Fayette*, IL 8 May (TAM), and a flight of 1770 Chimney Swifts was observed winging past Chicago's Grant Park 2 Jun (DFS). A longshore flight of 450 Northern Flickers at D.S.P. 28 Mar (BJG et al.) provided the season's maximum tally.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

An unusually early Eastern Wood-Pewee arrived in *Adams*, IL 17 Apr (AGD). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers appeared in excellent numbers, as evidenced by reports of 14 on the *Lake*, IN lakefront 20 May (JKC, DSt et al.) and 9 at the Ryerson W.M.A., *Lake*, IL 22 May (SDB, SLD). Other noteworthy flycatcher reports included an early Acadian in *Massac*, IL 24 Apr (KAM, FKB), a very early Alder at Fox Island Park, IN 11 May (RPR), 23 calling Willows at Beverly Shores, IN 22 May (JKC, SD, EMH et al.), and an overzealous Eastern Kingbird in *Clark*, IN 11 Apr (JHv, SHv). Rare flycatchers included the Say's Phoebe that was reported at Carl. L. last fall and winter. This spring, it was seen at the same location 18 & 21 Mar (MSf, ph. TAM, DMK). Indiana's 4th Say's Phoebe was discovered at the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary parking lot 30 Apr (ph. JJM, MT). Also quite noteworthy were Indiana's 2nd Vermilion Flycatch-



This migrant Long-eared Owl, a rare sight, was at the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary, Illinois 17 April 2004. Photograph by Kathy Feldman.

er, an ad. male seen at Beverly Shores 30 Apr (†Randy Thompson, Karen Thompson) and that state's first Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in 10 years, which flew past the



This female Tufted Duck (at left) was found by the photographer on Lake Springfield, Illinois 15 March 2004 and relocated on 17 March at the Buffalo Sewage Ponds, where it remained through 19 March. This bird provided the first Illinois record in twenty years and the first ever away from Lake Michigan. Photograph by H. David Bohlen.

D.S.P. lakewatch site 18 Apr (BJG). Scissor-taileds were also reported in *Warren*, IL 18 May (LLH) and at Jax. P. 5 Jun (SLC).

The latest Northern Shrike was reported at L. Cal. 19 Mar (WJM). A record spring count of 28 Bell's Vireos near Harrisburg in *Saline*, IL 20 May was called "just the tip of the iceberg at this location" (SDB). The Re-

gion's easternmost Bell's arrived in *Henry*, IN 11 May (SAP). Unusually early vireos included a Yellow-throated Vireo at Fort Massac S.P. 28 Mar (KAM), a Blue-headed at Fort Massac S.P. 15 Apr (KAM), 2 Blue-headed at Fox Island Park, IN 17 Apr (Haw et al.), and a Philadelphia at Montrose 30 Apr (GAW).

In the L. Cal. area, W. J. Marcisz writes that, following the mortality associated with West Nile virus, the Blue Jay population is back to normal, a contention apparently supported by a fine longshore flight of 2850 at D.S.P. 6 May (JJM, SD, EP et al.). By contrast, two correspondents noted that American Crow numbers have not fully rebounded (WJM, DFS). The Red-breasted Nuthatch flight was feeble; the peak count was of 5 at Miller Beach, IN 20 Mar (MT). Several correspondents noted that Winter Wrens were scarce this spring; the maximum tally was only 4 *Massac*, IL 20 Mar (KAM). A tardy Winter Wren lingered at Franke Park, IN 10 May (Haw, JCr). It was a good spring for Sedge Wrens, with numerous reports and a maximum count of 14 at Goose Lake Prairie W.M.A., IL 19 May (JcP). Vanguard of a typical Marsh Wren flight arrived quite early in *Jackson*, IL 28 Mar (KAM).

A Townsend's Solitaire in *Wayne*, IN 11 Apr (ph., †WHB et al.) provided that state's southernmost and latest record. The *Catharus* thrush situation appears to have improved. Veery reports, highlighted by a maximum count of 20 at Jax. P. 19 May (PRC, SLC), were up across the Region, the best Gray-cheeked flight since 1997 was reported on the Chicago lakefront (DFS), Swainson's Thrushes were reported in excellent numbers in s. Illinois (KAM), and an impressive 66 Hermits were logged at McCormick Place, Chicago 17 Apr (GAW). American Pipits were also plentiful this spring, with peak counts of 300 at Carl. L. 12 Apr (DMK), 100 at T.N.C.K.S. 16 Apr (MT), and 100 in *Boone*, IN 17 Apr (RLH). Excellent longshore Cedar Waxwing flights were recorded, with an astronomical 13,800 at D.S.P. 22 May (BJG) and 2770 at Evanston 17 May (EWW); both tallies constitute record counts.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Overall, assessments of the warbler flight included slightly more positives than negatives. The consensus was that Cape May, Pine, and Blackpoll Warblers all staged unusually strong flights. In contrast, Blue-winged, Bay-breasted, and Black-and-white

numbers were down this spring. Noteworthy among numerous early arrivals were a male Cape May at Jax. P. 21 Apr (KDA), a Black-and-white at Salamonie Res., IN 27 Mar (DR, SSc), 2 Louisiana Waterthrushes in the Indiana Dunes 27 Mar (BJG), and a male Wilson's Warbler at the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary, IN 16 Apr (ph. JJM). Record warbler counts included 80 Magnolias on the North Shore Channel, Cook, IL 15 May (SGM), 16 Pines at D.S.P. 17 Apr (JJM, SRB, JKC, RJP et al.), 14 Pines at the Morton Arboretum 26 Apr (EES), and 106 American Redstarts on the Lake, IN lakefront 20 May (JKC, KJB et al.) Summer Tanagers were plentiful and pressed northward in above-average numbers. An early Scarlet Tanager arrived at Jax. P. 18 Apr (KC, PRC, KA).

A male Spotted Towhee at Montrose 16 May (RDH, *vide* WJM) provided the season's only report. A hefty Clay-colored Sparrow flight occurred on the lakefront, with peak tallies of 7 in Cook, IL 16 May (WSS), 5 at Montrose 13 May (GAW), and 4 on the Indiana lakefront 6 May (JJM et al.). Lark Sparrows had early arrival dates in the north, with 2 at D.S.P. 18 Apr (WSS), and singles appeared at Jax. P. (COG) and West Beach, IN (ph. BHs) the following day. A tardy Grasshopper Sparrow migrant was at Montrose 20 May (GAW). The peak Henslow's Sparrow tally of 49 was logged at two w.-cen. Indiana strip mines 12 May (LWS, MCl et al.). Noteworthy reports of migrant *Ammodramus* included 8 Le Conte's at Clinton L., IL 10 Apr (DTW et al.) and 3 Nelson's Sharp-tailed at Montrose 23 May (KAM, RDH). Harris's Sparrows occurred only in Illinois, where 4 singles, including one in *Winebago* 8-9 May (DTW), were noted. By far the largest White-crowned Sparrow tally was logged in Chicago's Grant Park, where 360 were counted 10 May (DFS). A Dark-eyed Junco tarried on the Indiana University Bloomington campus until 11 May (SHv), tying the late record for s. Indiana. The largest longspur numbers occurred in Indiana, where 600 Laplands were recorded in *Newton* 2 Apr (JJM) and 400 Smith's were logged in *Warren* 10 Apr (EMH).

Blue Grosbeaks arrived early this spring, as evidenced by 2 in *Jackson*, IL 18 Apr (KAM). Exceptional Indigo Bunting counts included 163 in *Saline*, IL 8 May (EWW)



This Say's Phoebe, one of two in the Illinois & Indiana region in spring 2004, was found 21 March at the south end of Lake Carlyle in Clinton County, Illinois—the exact location where one was seen last fall and winter. Photograph by Travis Mahan.

and a longshore flight of 160 at D.S.P. 9 May (JJM). For the 4th consecutive year, Painted Buntings returned to the East St. Louis, IL site. This year, a male was seen there 31 May (DMK). Dickcissels were unusually plentiful this spring; the highest count of 99 was recorded in *Vermillion* and *Clay*, IN reclaimed strip mines 12 May (LWS, MCl et al.).

The Eastern Meadowlark migration began in Feb and extended into late May, as



One of several detected as flyovers there this spring, this Lark Sparrow was at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's West Beach 19 April 2004. Photograph by Benjamin Hess.

evidenced by the presence of single migrants at Montrose 21 May (GAW) and at D.S.P. 17 May (KJB). A count of 15+ male Western Meadowlarks at Lost Mound N.W.R., IL 15 Apr (SDB) was quite impressive. Encouragingly, following last year's devastating drought, heavy spring rains re-

plenished water levels, again creating nesting habitat for Yellow-headed Blackbirds in the L. Cal. area (WJM). Despite a record-high Illinois count of 1500 Brewer's Blackbirds at Carl. L. 27 Mar (DMK), the s. Illinois flight was judged poor (KAM). An early Orchard Oriole at the Chicago Botanic Garden 22 Apr (DRD) heralded an above-average flight in the n. reaches of the Region. Once again, Purple Finches provided the lion's share of the season's winter finches; this spring's peak count was of 39 in *Monroe*, IN 21 Mar (LWS). Otherwise, the winter finch flight consisted of two-dozen Common Redpolls, a maximum Pine Siskin tally of 70 at the Morton Arboretum, IL 11 Apr (UG), and zero crossbills.

Contributors cited (subregional editors in boldface): Kim D. Ainis, Alan Anderson, Kash Ashiyae, Susan R. Bagby, Steven D. Bailey, Frank K. Bennett, Richard G. Bjorklund, Sigurd N. Bjorklund, H. David Bohlen, Gary and Lisa Bowman (G & LB), Arlene E. Brei, Kenneth J. Brock, William H. Buskirk, Scott L. Carpenter, John K. Cassidy, Karin Cassel, John S. Castrale, Jeff Chapman (JCp), Josh Christian (JCr), Mike Clark (MCl), **Paul R. Clyne (Illinois)**, David Daniels, Donald R. Dann, Sheryl L. DeVore, Al G. Dierkes, Steve Doud, J. Barny Dunning, Scott R. Evans, Robert E. & Karen Fisher (R & KF), Steve Freed, Urs Geiser, Chet O. Gresham, Peter B. Grube, Brendan J. Grube, Leroy Harrison, Jim Haw (Haw), Cloyce Hedge, Roger L. Hedge, Jim Hengeveld (JHv), Susan Hengeveld (SHv), Benjamin Hess (BHs), R. Hickson (RHs), Mary Ann Hoeffliger, Frank R. Holmes, Larry L. Hood, Edward M. Hopkins, Robert D. Hughes, G. Johnson, Dan M. Kassebaum, John Lawrence, Travis A. Mahan, Walter J. Marcisz, Carolyn A. Marsh, Jeffrey J. McCoy, Keith A. McMullen, Steven G. Mlodinow, Randy J. Pals, Steve A. Pancol, Larry Peavler, Ed Powers, Roger P. Rang, Doug Rood, Sandy Schacht (SSc), Thomas S. Schulenberg, Michi Schulenberg (MSh), Eric E. Secker, Diana Seger (DSe), Mark Seiffert (MSf), Wesley S. Serafin, A. Spencer, Lee W. Sterrenburg, Dan Stoltzfus (DSf), Douglas F. Stotz, Michael Topp, Eric W. Walters, David E. Willard, Daniel T. Williams, Jr., Geoff A. Williamson. Many others contributed to the state lists, but could not be personally acknowledged; all have my thanks for their contributions. 🐦