



The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

Champaign County Audubon Society • A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

May Program

2016 Kendeigh Grant Recipients

Thursday, May 4, 7pm

Urbana Free Library Auditorium

Presenters: Cassandra Wilcoxon and Brett Dorak

Cassandra Wilcoxon’s research examined the use of cover crops on agricultural fields and whether they are beneficial to birds during spring migration.

The goal of her research was to identify which farming practices benefit birds most, so that farmers can be provided with better recommendations to support higher bird abundance and diversity in a landscape largely dominated by row-crop agriculture.

Brett Dorak’s project examined wintering ecology of urban populations of Canada Geese, with the goal of investigating the movements of wintering goose populations and their use of thermal refuges in the Greater Chicago Metropolitan Area.

A better understanding can help us develop strategies to influence their movements in the vicinity of airports where collisions with aircraft may occur.

Member’s Birdwalk

May 13, 7:30am

Trelease woods/Phillips tract

Meet at the Urbana Meijer parking lot

Our pilot programs were a great success! The Perkins project saw 8 people attend, while the walks through the University research plots had 15. Special thanks to our guides at both locations: Caitlin Lill and Tyler Hedlund, respectively. The smaller, more agile group of passionate birders meant we had some fantastic sights, great conversation, and very cooperative birds. CCAS is currently exploring new locations for Member walks in the fall.

Due to the location’s popularity among membership, the next Member’s walk will be held at the Trelease woods/Phillips tract location May 13th. Please meet us at the back of the Urbana Meijer’s parking lot. We’ll be embarking at 7:30 sharp!

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Champaign County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803
ChampaignCountyAudubon.org
mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org

Officers

- Co-Presidents: Sara Johnson and Cheryl Pettus
- Vice President: John Dunkelberger
- Secretary: Charlene Anchor
- Treasurer: Allan Penwell

Members at Large, 2016-2017

- Janet Jokela
- Caitlin Lill
- Jeff Peyton

Members at Large, 2017-2018

- Beth Chato
- Brody Dunn
- Carie Nixon

Committee Chairs

- Bylaws: vacant
- Conservation: Jeff Peyton
- Education: Pam Leiter
- Field Trip: Beth Chato
- Finance: Astrid Berkson
- Hospitality: vacant
- Membership: Caitlin Lill
- Nature Shop: Beth Chato
- Program: Sara Johnson
- Publications: vacant
- Publicity: Carie Nixon

Newsletter Coordinator: Ruth Walker

Webmaster & BirdNotes Listserve Manager: Pam Leiter

Champaign County Audubon publishes *The Meadowlark Messenger* nine times per year. Comments regarding the newsletter, or articles for submission, are welcome.



Get this newsletter delivered right to your inbox—in color! Would you like to go paperless and help our funds go further? Please visit the Newsletter

page on our website and enter your name and email address.



10% discount for CCAS members!
Monday–Saturday, 9am–4pm
Anita Purves Nature Center
1505 N. Broadway, Urbana, IL

Looking for a bird guide or binoculars, or perhaps a hummingbird feeder? The shop has a good selection of these along with much else. Come shop and help support local environmental programs.



Field Notes

Submitted by: Beth Chato

Spring migration is well under way. Large flocks of Golden Plover, as well as other shore birds have been seen. A Black-necked Stilt was at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve.

Warblers seen so far are Yellow-throated, Prothonotary, Parula, Palm, Pine, Nashville, Yellow, Black & White, as well as many Yellow-rumped. Great Horned Owls, and eagles are nesting.

Spring Bird Count

Saturday, May 6

Join this important citizen science initiative that's been in existence for over 40 years! Birders go to assigned locations for all or part of the day, and record numbers of each of all bird species seen, which are then turned into the County compiler. For more info, contact Beth Chato at ejchato@gmail.com or 344-6803.

Field Trip to Allerton Park

Saturday May 27, 8am

Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot at 8am to carpool

Allerton has nearly 1,000 acres of native floodplain and upland forest which support a variety of animals and birds, including many species rare to central Illinois. The park is currently interested in collecting bird data and we can help with a report from this field trip. Bring lunch if you like.

Birdnotes Listserve

Join our Birdnotes listserv to get the latest local bird sightings in your inbox!

Here's how: go to ChampaignCountyAudubon.org and click on 'Join Birdnotes.' Enter your info, then click 'Subscribe.'

Bald Eagles in Illinois: A Huge Success Story!

Submitted by: Pam Leiter

The Bald Eagle has been the United States' national symbol since 1782 and a cultural symbol for native peoples for far longer.

Eagle populations in the United States declined significantly in the first half of the 1900s. By the 1950s, there were no Bald Eagles in Illinois.

In the early 1970s the U.S. took actions that significantly helped eagles and other species that depend on aquatic ecosystems: it banned DDT, created the Environmental Protection Agency, and passed the Clean Water Act.

Illinois is now one of the best places to see Bald Eagles in the winter - the state is second only to Alaska for the number of wintering eagles in the U.S! Sometimes many eagles will congregate around remaining open water along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. January and February is the best time to see them.

In Champaign County, they have become a common sight, and several pairs are now nesting here! Observations of a new nest this year in St. Joseph indicate that the adults have successfully hatched at least one egg - they have been observed making motions characteristic of feeding eaglets. There is also one nest at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve that successfully fledges eaglets each year, and one nest near Mahomet in which eaglets have been observed. Vermilion County also has several nests.

Please respect these wild animals by observing them from a distance.

Bald Eagle nests are large - most are about 6 feet across. Many eagles add sticks to the same nest each year, and use them for many years. They lay eggs in March or April, and incubation is about 35 days. The young eagles stay in the nest for about 3 months.

Bald Eagles eat fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. They will take their prey live, or eat carrion when available.

We wish them the best!



Adults are dark brown with a white head and tail. Their 'song' sounds more like a seagull than a mighty eagle!



Immature eagles are mostly dark brown, with white mottling in varying amounts. They will get their adult plumage in about five years.



Bald Eagle nests are very large, and are made of sticks.



A Bird's Eye View: 100 Years of a Changing Illinois Landscape

2017 Exhibit at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center

Many people don't realize that there have been big changes in bird populations within living memory.

These changes have been influenced by several trends, and we are still learning about their impact on natural communities.

Protections such as the Clean Water Act and the Migratory Bird Act have had positive impacts. Changes in technology, agricultural practices, and societal shifts have had mixed impacts - some have been beneficial for certain bird species while other changes have severely impacted birds.

Success stories include Canada Geese and Bald Eagles (both had nearly gone extinct in Illinois!), while species such as Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks are declining.

At this exhibit:

- Gain a birds' eye view on changes in the Illinois landscape for the past 100 years
- Learn how birds navigate during migration, and where they go
- View a variety of bird wings and their beautiful coloration!

The exhibit runs through Dec 29, 2017. The Homer Lake Interpretive Center is located at the Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2573 S Homer Lake Rd, Homer, IL 61849.

Sunday Morning Birdwalks

Our most popular event! Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot, 1505 N. Broadway, Urbana, at 7:30am. Walks in the nearby Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park officially last about 1 1/2 hours (though some intrepid birders stay later).

Walks continue each Sunday through the end of May.

Anyone welcome; you don't have to be a member of CCAS to attend. This is an adventure for any age, and level of birding experience, as we share our identification skills.



34th Annual Birdathon: May 7-14

Illinois birds are in trouble - and you can help!



Your pledges needed!

During the Birdathon, teams eagerly search for as many birds species they can find. Pledge donations are based on the number of species seen by your selected team, or you may pledge a flat amount.

This year's teams:

1. Old-timers: Jim Smith, Beth Chato (2016: 92 species)
2. The Big Sit: Beez Gordon, Helen Parker (2016: 39)
Urbana Park Rangers: Judy Miller & staff (2016: 132)
3. Forest Preserve Rangers: Dan Olson & staff (2016: 132)
4. Crazy Kayakers: Peter & Betsy Kuchinke (2016: 71)
5. Ghostbusters: Charlene Anchor, Janet Jokela (2016: 40)
6. Northeast Corner: Susan & Brian Stearns (2016: 86)
7. Or form your own team! Go where you like and collect pledges from friends

For more info, contact Beth Chato at ejchato@gmail.com or 344-6803.

Who was Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh?

Dr. Kendeigh was an eminent ornithologist and a renowned professor of zoology at the University of Illinois. He was a founding member, president, and board member of CCAS.

He also served as president of the Wilson Ornithological Society, and the Ecological Society of America, vice president of the American Ornithologists Union, and co-founder of the Nature Conservancy and Animal Behavior Society.

One of Dr. Kendeigh's most enduring contributions was a standard method for censusing birds.

Where will my donation go?

Your birdathon contributions go toward the CCAS Kendeigh Memorial Fund, which supports scientific ornithological research in Illinois.

Since its beginning in 1988, the fund has supported over \$30,000 of research projects on Illinois birds. Topics have ranged from the impact of cowbird nest predation to the varied problems of declining grassland birds. Many grant recipients have gone on to prestigious careers in the natural history field.

A successful Birdathon will support next year's grants and move toward our dream of a sustaining endowment fund.

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Yes! I will pledge to support the Birdathon!

I pledge \$ _____ per species seen by team _____

I will make a fiat donation of \$ _____ to help the cause

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone # (____) _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

Send this form to: CCAS Birdathon, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882, or contact Beth Chato (ejchato@gmail.com or 344-6803). Checks should be made out to CCAS; note Kendeigh Fund on the memo line. *Thank you!!*

Announcing the 2017 Kendeigh Grant Recipients:

Submitted by: Jeff Peyton

Congratulations to Maureen Hurd and Heather Herakovich!

Heather Herakovich is a doctoral student in Biology at Northern Illinois University who is writing her dissertation on the impacts of tallgrass prairie restoration and bison reintroduction on grassland-breeding birds. The conversion of prairie in Illinois to row-crop agriculture has severely impacted grassland-dependent birds. Several species are in decline and in danger of regional extirpation. Prairie restorations hope to arrest the loss of this disappearing habitat with native prairie plantings and reintroduction of historical disturbances like fire and, in the case of a few large restored prairies, bison grazing. Heather's research seeks to assess the impacts of these disturbances by examining nest density success across sites with and without bison grazing, and determine if fire, plant composition, climate, and parasitism play a role in nest density and survivorship of these nests. The study will also monitor nesting species composition and nest predator types across the sites. Research like Heather's will help inform management practices in prairie restorations and remnants to create the best conditions for wildlife success. Funds from the Kendeigh Grant will help pay for transportation to the study sites at Nachusa Grasslands, field supplies, and artificial nest materials for studying depredation of eggs.

Maureen Hurd is a student at University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, pursuing a Master of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. Maureen's project focuses on chimney swifts. Aerial insectivores in general have experienced dramatic declines in recent years, at higher rates than other passerines in general. Chimney swifts in particular were declared Near Threatened in 2010, and in Illinois have declined at a rate of -3.7% per year since 1966. Probable factors in their population decrease include changes in insect populations (possibly associated with insecticide use) and loss of breeding habitat. Changes in chimney construction and increasing rarity of suitable hollow trees make potential nest sites scarce. By constructing and monitoring nesting towers, GPS tracking of adult chimney swift foraging behavior, and conducting chimney swift point counts at sites throughout the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois, Maureen seeks to examine the effects of habitat and landscape characteristics on chimney swift abundance and the impact of those characteristics on nest success, provisioning rate, and foraging patterns. The results of the surveys can clarify the key factors in chimney swift decline and help inform future conservation efforts. The Kendeigh Grant funds will help cover the cost of GPS transmitters that will be used to obtain detailed data on foraging behavior and habitat use.

Volunteer opportunity!

Maureen Hurd, one of our Kendeigh grant recipients, needs help monitoring Chimney Swift towers at the following locations: Kennekuk County Park, Vermilion River Observatory (in Danville), Allerton Park, Weldon Springs State Park, Sangchris Lake State Park, Edward R. Madigan State Fish and Wildlife Area, and Shelbyville State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Chimney Swift checks would ideally be done once a week near dusk for about 15 minutes. Please contact Maureen Hurd at mhurd2@illinois.edu to volunteer.

Join Champaign County Audubon Society!

Yes, I'd like to become a member!

When you join the Champaign County Audubon Society, 100% of your dues and donations support our efforts (and they're tax deductible!).

\$ _____ CCAS Membership (\$15 due each January).

\$ _____ Additional donation to CCAS

\$ _____ **TOTAL**

I am a new member I am renewing my membership

Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone # (_____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

Beginning in 2017, CCAS members will be automatically enrolled to receive our newsletter by e-mail; check this box if you would prefer to receive a **paper** copy.

Checks should be made payable to CCAS. Send this form and your payment to: CCAS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

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Join National Audubon Society!

When you join National Audubon Society you receive one year of Audubon magazine. You also have the option to receive local birding and community events delivered to your inbox from CCAS.

- **New members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/nas-g50> or call 1-844-428-3826. Please tell them Champaign County Audubon Society sent you using our chapter code "G50."
- **Renewing members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/renew-nas> or call 1-844-428-3826.



Audubon

The Champaign County Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.



Champaign County Audubon Society
PO Box 882
Urbana, IL 61803-0882

Calendar of Events

Sundays, March thru May 28, 7:30-9am
Sunday Morning Bird Walks
Meet in the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.

Thursday, May 4, 7pm.
May Program: 2016 Kendeigh Grant Recipients

Saturday, May 6
Spring Bird Count
Count birds for all or part of the day. For more info contact Beth Chato: ejchato@gmail.com or 217-344-6803.

May 7 - 14
34th Annual Birdathon
See page 5 for more info and a pledge form. Or contact Beth Chato: ejchato@gmail.com or 217-344-6803.

Saturday, May 13, 7:30am
Member's Birdwalk at Trelease woods/Phillips tract
Meet at the Urbana Meijer parking lot

Saturday, May 13
9-11am Busey Woods; 1-3pm Weaver Park Urbana Park District's Stewardship Days.
Call Anita Purves Nature Center (384-4062) for more info and to register.

Thursday, May 18, 7pm; Board Meeting.
Anita Purves Nature Center. Members are welcome.

Saturday May 27, 8am
Field Trip to Allerton Park
Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot at 8am to carpool.

Visit our website for more information!