May Program
Chimney Swifts
Thursday, May 3, 7pm
Urbana Free Library

Presenter: Maureen Hurd, 2017 Kendeigh Grant Recipient

Maureen’s research examined habitat use and foraging behavior of Chimney Swifts, a declining species. Her project sought to examine the effects of habitat and landscape characteristics on the abundance of Chimney Swifts and on nest success and foraging behavior.

Funding from CCAS helped cover the cost of GPS transmitters to track movements of tagged swifts. Light refreshments will be served.

Illinois Spring Bird Count
Saturday, May 5

This is a statewide count which is organized by county. Birders are assigned to given areas where they count the number of birds of each species seen. They also record time spent, distance travelled, etc.

Beth Chato is the organizer for Champaign County and she is looking for participants. Contact her at 344-6803 or ejchato@gmail.com if you are interested.

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

The shop has a choice of bird and wildflower guides to help identify what you see. New stock of nature related small items. Also the usual selection of children’s and coloring books. As always all proceeds support environmental education programs.

Field Notes
Submitted by: Beth Chato
Migration is heating up with Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-rumped, Yellow-throated, Parula, Nashville, and Pine Warblers arriving. White Pelicans were seen in the Mahomet area and at the Middle Fork Preserve. Tree and Barn Swallows are back. Black-crowned Night Heron at Kaufman Lake. A Black-bellied Whistling Duck was at Lake of the Woods. Shorebirds are also coming through with a Marbled Godwit near Ivesdale the highlight.

Low-mobility Bird Sit
Saturday, May 12, 8-9am
Meet at the Magic bridge parking lot in Crystal Lake park. To find the lot, use the N. Broadway entrance to the park and look for the CCAS event sign.

Bring a folding chair and your binoculars, or borrow a pair from CCAS. This event is wheelchair accessible.

Birdnotes Listserve
Join our Birdnotes listserve 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.’
Champaign County Audubon Society • A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

35th Annual Birdathon: May 6-13, 2018

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 (2017: 99 species)
2. The Big Sit: Beez Gordon, Helen Parker (2017: 39)
3. Urbana Parks & Forest Preserves Staff: (2017: 119)
5. Ghostbusters: Charlene Anchor, Janet Jokela (2017: 53)
6. President’s Team: Sara Johnson & friends (2017: 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.

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.

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!!

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.

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Announcing the 2018 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Submitted by: Jeff Peyton

Congratulations to Samantha Capel and Daniel Goldberg!

Each year, the Champaign County Audubon Society offers two grants of up to $1000 for research in ornithology.

Samantha Capel is a doctoral student in Biology at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and received her bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry from Illinois State University with a concentration in Molecular Biology. Samantha’s research seeks to use genetic sequencing to assess mate choice and hatching survival among translocated greater prairie chicken hens. The last century saw a dramatic decline in the numbers prairie chickens in Illinois as a result of habitat destruction, from millions of birds in the 19th century to being nearly extirpated by the end of the 20th, with 46 birds remaining in 1994. In an attempt to rescue the remaining populations, greater prairie chickens have been translocated from out of state populations in Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

Samantha’s project will compare genotypes of offspring of hens translocated from Kansas to those of translocated males, to determine whether hens are preferentially selecting mates from among established Illinois males or translocated Kansas ones. She will then assess hatching success to determine whether inbreeding resulting from population bottleneck affects hatching survival in chicks with Illinois paternity. Samantha hopes that her results can help inform conservation practices when it comes to translocating populations, specifically in addressing whether practices can be improved by skewing sex ratios of translocated species. Kendeigh Grant funds will be used for sequencing and to purchase reagents and materials necessary for library construction of extracted DNAs.

Daniel Goldberg is a doctoral student at Illinois State University with a master’s degree in Biology from the University of California, Riverside. Daniel’s project will use acoustic monitoring to analyze population distributions of rallids, the family that includes rails and gallinules. Several rallid species are suffering declining numbers, and three species are listed as endangered in Illinois. Their declining populations as well as their secretive habits – hiding in dense marshy areas and primarily vocalizing at night – make accurate estimations of rallid populations difficult.

Daniel will use call playback and audio recording to monitor wetland sites for rallids during breeding season. Once the presence of rallids is confirmed at a site, Daniel will switch from surveys using call playback to passive recording surveys. Sound data will then be analyzed to determine population distributions of the target rallid species across Daniel’s sites. With his data, Daniel will create species distribution maps for the target species. These maps can then be used to select promising sites for future study of rallids, as well as informing conservation practices with wetland habitats.

In Defense of Dark Skies, Continued from Page 6

other mammals. But much more important, every visitor, every participant in its programs will learn about the importance of making our nighttime skies a better environment for all of us.

What can birders and other Audubon Society members do? We can let people know we support the Forest Preserve District’s efforts to secure Dark Sky Park status for Middle Fork. But more critical, we can begin to change the way we think about our own outdoor lighting and that of our community, and strive to create a more dark-friendly environment. Who knows? Perhaps, eventually, we can bring back the night, or at least some of it.

Roger Digges, member, Champaign County Audubon Society and Champaign County Forest Preserve District Citizens’ Advisory Committee
Thank You Donors!
Thank you to all who have donated beyond membership dues:
Richard & Dolores Bishop, Nancy Morse, Ken & Brenda Mulle, Judith Rowen, Patricia Simpson and Stephen Tillman

Thank You New & Renewing Members!
Welcome New Members:
Carol Ellis, Michelle Neill, Kush Paul, Barbara Ramsey and Lisa Travise

Thank You Renewing Members:
Richard & Dolores Bishop, Nancy Morse, Ken & Brenda Mulle, Judith Rowen, Patricia Simpson, Stephen Tillman and Jackie Wilen

Questions? Please contact our Membership Chair, Rachel Vinsel (Rachel.Vinsel -at- gmail.com)

June Potluck and Swallow-watching
Thursday, June 7, 6pm; potluck begins at 6:30pm
Walnut Hill Shelter, Homer Lake Forest Preserve

Enjoy an evening at beautiful Homer Lake with fellow bird enthusiasts while you watch the Cliff Swallows and many other swallows. Please bring your own table service, your own beverage and a dish to share.
In Defense of Dark Skies
Submitted by: Roger Digges

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District has applied to the International Dark Sky Association for Dark Sky Park status for the Middle Fork Forest Preserve.

Now you may wonder what a Dark Sky Park or the International Dark Sky Association is. You may never have been to the Middle Fork Forest Preserve, or, if you’re new to the area, know anything about the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. You might question why in the world an Audubon member should care about a Dark Sky park.

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) is an 83-year-old “local property tax-supported government agency charged with the stewardship of six forest preserves covering almost 4,000 acres.” One of those preserves is 1,700 acre Middle Fork “composed of old hardwood timber, reforested lowlands, grassy meadows, and in-progress prairie restorations.” Middle Fork contains the county’s only waterfowl management area and is also home to the Harry L. Swartz Campground. The preserve is located 30 miles northeast of Urbana on Illinois’ only Wild and Scenic River, the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River.

Because of its relatively remote location, Middle Fork can boast the darkest skies in the county. For nearly ten years, the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society (CUAS) has taken advantage of those skies by offering twice yearly Starwatch programs in which it orients the public to the night sky and offers people views through the telescopes of members of CUAS. The organization plans to not only double its Starwatch offerings, but also provide professional development for members of the Forest Preserve District’s staff so the District can offer its own programs. In early 2016, David Leake of CUAS and the CCFPD’s Citizens Advisory Committee began a collaboration which resulted in the District’s application to the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) to recognize Middle Fork as a Dark Sky Park.

IDA is a 30-year-old non-profit agency whose “mission is to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting.” Among IDA’s five categories of Dark Sky Place is a Dark Sky Park, a publicly or private owned space which protects the environment, implements dark-friendly outdoor lighting, and provides dark sky programs for the public. The Forest Preserve District is seeking this status for Middle Fork, and is transitioning its outdoor lighting and improving its programming and interpretive materials to enhance the preserve as a dark sky site.

This would be a remarkable achievement. There are no other certified Dark Sky Parks in Illinois. Or Indiana. Or Iowa. Or Missouri. Or Kentucky.

But why should birders or members of the CCAS with other interests care? Because the loss of darkness in our night skies negatively affects all wildlife. In a Nature Conservancy report concerning how to reduce the ecological impact of shale development in the Appalachians, the authors discuss the impact of artificial lighting on wildlife including birds. They note that artificial illumination causes diurnal birds to extend their foraging into darker times of the night, which makes them more prone to predation. On the other hand, it may reduce the foraging time of nocturnal birds like owls. Birds have been shown to alter the times of their dawn chorus which can affect reproductive success because their displays don’t show up as well. Some birds won’t nest within 300 meters of an artificial light source, which reduces available nesting habitat which already can be difficult for birds to find. In the National Institutes of Health’s April, 2015, Kids Environment, Kids Health, a researcher notes, “Melatonin production, which is dark dependent, is suppressed when the dark is interrupted at night. Melatonin is involved in circadian rhythm regulation, sleep, hormonal expression of darkness, seasonal reproduction, retinal physiology, antioxidant free-radical scavenging, cardiovascular regulation, immune activity, cancer control, and lipid and glucose metabolism.” In other words, our outdoor lighting diminishes the health not only of birds, but of most animals, including ourselves.

By providing a darker environment as part of its efforts to become a Dark Sky Park, Middle Fork will provide better habitat for birds, insects, bats and...
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: ______________ - __________

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

Our Mission:

Promote interest, enjoyment, and understanding of all aspects of our natural environment, and actively encourage the protection of wildlife and native habitats.

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."

Sunday Morning Bird Walks  
Sundays, March 4 - May 27, 7:30-9am  
Meet in Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.

Monthly Program: Chimney Swifts  
Thursday, May 3, 7pm  
Urbana Free Library

Illinois Spring Bird Count: May 5  
An annual bird count that consists of volunteers conducting bird censuses. More info: http://wwx.inhs.illinois.edu/collections/birds/sbc

35th Annual Birdathon: May 6-13  
Participate in the count, or pledge a donation! Contact Beth Chato by email or phone (344-6803) for more info.

Low-mobility Bird Sit  
Saturday, May 12, 8-9am  
Meet at the Magic bridge parking lot in Crystal Lake park.

Board Meeting  
Monday, May 21, 7pm  
Anita Purves Nature Center

Potluck and Swallow-watching  
Thursday, June 7, 6pm; potluck begins at 6:30pm  
Walnut Hill Shelter, Homer Lake Forest Preserve  
Enjoy an evening at beautiful Homer Lake with fellow bird enthusiasts.  
Visit our website for more information!