



# The Meadowlark Messenger

April 2012 • Volume 29, No. 3

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

## President's Column

Darin Eastburn & Caroline Mallory  
Co-Presidents of Champaign County  
Audubon Society (CCAS)

With the Illinois primary just behind us and a summer of campaigning to look forward to, politics and political issues are on the minds of many who are conscious of the impact of public policy on the environment and conservation. A lot of people associate the Audubon Society with the pastime of bird-watching. However, Audubon also engages in advocacy for a number of environmental causes at the national, state, and local levels. The primary focus of most of these efforts is to protect or restore habitat for wildlife.

If you visit the website for the National Audubon Society (<http://www.audubon.org/>) and click on the link for "conservation", you can read about some of the issues that Audubon is working on at a national level. These include the Mississippi River Initiative, an effort to help restore areas impacted by hurricanes, floods, and the oil spill; the Climate Change Campaign; and the Gulf oil spill restoration effort. In fact, a representative of the National Audubon Society contacted local Audubon chapters recently, asking us to sign a petition in favor of the Restore Act, legislation aimed at the Gulf restoration effort. The legislation was recently passed by the US Senate, and I presume that the advocacy of Audubon members played a role in that success.

Issues of interest to Audubon chapters within Illinois include the request for a permit to allow hydraulic fracturing, sometimes called "Fracking", sand mining in an area adjacent to Starved Rock State Park. There are fears that the mining operation will negatively alter the unique habitats within the park, including the brackish wetland area, as well as negative impacts on the hydrology of the park and the surrounding area. Locally, the City of Champaign is considering enacting a tax on the use of plastic bags by retailers with the aim of significantly reducing the use of these bags, which would lessen the environmental impact of the single use bags. Both of these issues were discussed at a recent meeting of the board of the Champaign County Audubon Society. And while no collective action by the board was proposed, it is being considered, and members were encouraged to contact their political representative to make it clear that these issues are important to us.

With the local, state, and national political races currently underway, we can expect to hear a great deal from those seeking office over the next six months. Those of us concerned with issues that affect the quality of natural habitats and the survival of wildlife should pay particular attention to the stands that our candidates take on these important issues. And if we get the chance to meet them face to face, we should ask them to express their

opinions so that all voters can be better informed about how these representatives are likely to act on environmental issues. Government is what we make of it, based on whom we elect to represent our interests, so now is the time for us to make our voices heard.

## APRIL MEETING

Urbana Free Library  
Auditorium

Thursday, April 5 at 7 PM

Brian Stearns

is a respected emerging favorite among local wildlife photographers.

He is recognized for detail as he captures the essence of animals in their natural environment. Join us when he shares his adventures documenting native birds.

Birds of the Middle  
Fork Forest  
Preserve in  
Champaign County



drawing by Charles Tunnicliffe from  
*Mereside Chronicle* (1948)

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

### **Recent Bird Sightings: FIELD NOTES from Susan Stearns**

How does a birder know spring is here? The list of birds multiplies like rabbits! Bad joke - I know. But as I read Beth's report from last month and looked at just two weeks of postings on bird notes for this month, it sure seemed appropriate.

The waterfowl hotspots during the past few weeks have been at Heron Park, Clinton Lake, and Middle Fork (CCFPD) with sightings of Shovelers, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Pintails, Gadwalls, Widgeons, Coot, Wood Ducks, Mallards, Greater Yellow Legs, Tree Swallows, Song Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, Eagles, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Canada Geese, Great Blue Herons, Turkey Vultures, Red-winged Blackbirds, Grackles, Starlings, Mourning Doves, Robins, and Mute Swans. After hearing a report of hundreds of cranes flying over Heron Park in late February, none were sighted until the resident pair was found at the boardwalk mid-March. Other highlights include 17 Tundra Swans at Middle Fork Forest Preserve South Waterfowl Area and about 15 Herons at the Heron Park Rookery.

And of course, with spring, comes breeding season. Cooper's Hawks are chattering away; the Middle Fork Eagles are back on their original nest (west side of the river) and running off last year's off-spring; Morning Doves are incubating eggs; and local Barred Owls are nesting.

We can't forget all the bird reports from Busey Woods, Meadowbrook Park, U of I Woods, and backyards, especially now that Sunday morning birdwalks have resumed. Reports include various Hawks, Warblers, Finches, Sparrows, Wrens, and Woodpeckers, Blue Birds, and Nuthatches, as well as Pigeons, Juncos, White-winged Crossbills, Killdeer, Eastern Phoebe, Hairy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Eastern Towhee, Bronze-headed Cowbird, Northern Flicker, and Brown Creepers. Pheasants and Turkey Vultures have also been sighted in multiple locations. Watch out for that kettle of Turkey Vultures in Urbana. I hear they like to follow people home!

#### **Tentative April Field Trip**

**Saturday, April 14** to Middle Fork Fish & Wildlife Area in Vermilion County. Please check website for details.

#### **Sunday Morning Bird Walks**

**April 1 - May 27, 7:30 - 9 AM.**

Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods begin on March 4 and will continue every Sunday through May 27. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot. Bring binoculars if you have them. Audubon members will be present to help beginners.



### **AUDUBON NATURE SHOP**

**Unique Nature-Related Gifts**

ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER, 1515 NORTH BROADWAY, URBANA, IL  
**9-4 MONDAY-SATURDAY**

#### **SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

Carefully selected binoculars including the popular Energy Compact 8x21. New Identifier Ultra combines songs and pictures of 120 birds. Get ready for spring. Shop often and tell your friends. We can special order your needs.

## CONSERVATION CORNER -- Helen Parker, Conservation Chair

**Some good news:** The Senate has passed the RESTORE act, giving money for the cleanup and rehabilitation of the Gulf coast that was harmed by the oil spill a year ago.

**Some bad news:** When wolves were removed from the endangered species list, they became "fair game" for those who would destroy them. In Idaho, Federal agents are busy shooting wolves from the air. Reason? They want more elk & similar large game animals, which are the natural prey of wolves, to be available for big game hunters to kill. They really need to read Aldo Leopold's essay "Think Like a Mountain"., which points out the necessary role of predators in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

More evidence that some humans are unwilling to share this planet with other species: The town of Frederic, Colorado is requiring landowners to destroy any prairie dogs on their property. They will be fined if they let the rodents alone.

**In the good news department:** A survey of bat caves in Southern Illinois this winter has found no trace of white-nose syndrome. This fungal disease is wreaking havoc on bats in several eastern states. Given that bats are essential pollinators for many plants--not to mention that they eat mosquitoes--we hope that we remain free of white-nose!

**They're on their way!** Monarch butterflies have left their Mexican wintering grounds; and according to the web site "Journey North", some have come 1000 miles already!

### This just in from Prairie Rivers Network:

#### 1. Mississippi River Groups hit EPA with dual legal actions on pollution that fuels dead zone.

Prairie Rivers Network and other Mississippi River Collaborative partners announced two lawsuits filed against USEPA on Tuesday:

The first lawsuit challenges the EPA's denial of a 2008 petition to the agency asking for quantifiable standards and clean up plans for Dead Zone pollution.

The second lawsuit seeks to compel EPA to finally respond to an even older petition – a 2007 request that EPA modernize its decades-old pollution standards for sewage treatment plants and include the Dead Zone pollutants nitrogen and phosphorus in those standards. Current technology has evolved making it reasonable and feasible for sewage treatment plants to remove nitrogen and phosphorus.

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### Willow Catkins and Honey Bees

The honey bee goes forth from the hive in spring like the dove from Noah's ark, and it is not till after many days that she brings back the olive leaf, which in this case is a pellet of golden pollen upon each hip, usually obtained from the alder or the swamp willow. In a country where maple sugar is made, the bees get their first taste of sweet from the sap as it flows from the spiles, or as it dries and is condensed upon the sides of the buckets. They will sometimes, in their eagerness, come about the boiling place and be overwhelmed by the steam and the smoke. But bees appear to be more eager for bread in the spring than for honey; their supply of this article, perhaps, does not keep as well as their stores of the latter, hence fresh bread, in the shape of new pollen, is diligently sought for. My bees get their first supplies from the catkins of the willows. How quickly they find them out. If but one catkin opens anywhere within range, a bee is on hand that very hour to rifle it, and it is a most pleasing experience to stand near the hive some mild April day and see them come pouring in with their little baskets packed with this first fruitage of the spring. They will have new bread now; they have been to mill in good earnest; see their dusty coats, and the golden grist they bring home with them.

- John Burroughs

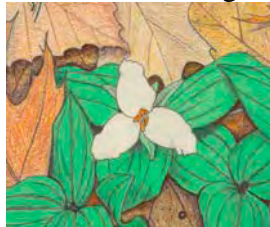
## Illinois Audubon Society Spring Gathering by Susan Stearns

This April, the Illinois Audubon Society is having their 2012 Spring Gathering in Danville, IL. The event will take place at the Danville Days Inn Hotel & Conference Center the weekend of April 20-22, 2012. All day Saturday and Sunday morning field trips go to your choice of the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, Crystal Lake Park/Busy Woods, Forest Glen Preserve, Heron Park, Kennekuk County Park, Camp Drake, and the Universal Mine/Peabody Grassland/Wetland Complex. Enjoy the Friday evening program and book signing "Side Channels" by Thomas Lerczak as well as the Saturday night banquet and program: "America's Famous, but Most Forgotten Naturalist" by Randy Lehman, Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Registration is just \$10 per person. Meals and banquet cost extra. Be sure to get your registration in soon as the number of spots available for some field trips are limited and must be reserved. For more information and registration forms, go online to <http://www.illinoisaudubon.org/>.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES** Bob Vaiden, Habitat Chair

Help rebuild our shattered environment! Join other volunteers and the Urbana Park District (UPD) for **Stewardship Saturdays**. Help collect seeds, remove invasive weeds, plant natives, improve trails and restore the native landscape. Please dress accordingly; gloves, tools and refreshments are provided. Call Anita Purves Nature Center (384-4062) to notify the UPD you are coming, AND so you can be notified if the work session has to be canceled! **Stewardship work days:**

April 14th:	Busey Woods	9 -11 am.	Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center
	Weaver Park	1 – 3 pm.	Turn right into park at entrance on East Main near Smith Road
April 28th:	Meadowbrook	9 -11 am.	Meet at Race Street parking lot
	Perkins Road	1 -3 pm.	Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road



### **Seeking Volunteers!**

Please give us a hand with membership duties. Someone is needed to maintain the membership rosters, the e-newsletter list, and print out mailing labels for the monthly newsletter. The estimated time commitment is approximately 2 hours per month. If you are interested, please email Janet Jokela at <<mailto:jjokela59@hotmail.com>>[jjokela59@hotmail.com](mailto:jjokela59@hotmail.com), or Darin Eastburn at <<mailto:eastburn@illinois.edu>>[eastburn@illinois.edu](mailto:eastburn@illinois.edu). Thank you.

### **Get Your Meadowlark Messenger Delivered Right to Your Inbox!**

Would you like to go paperless and receive your newsletter earlier? You can receive all the information you depend on from this newsletter in your inbox! Please visit our website ([www.champaigncountyaudubon.org](http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org)) and look under "What's New" for a link to a page where you can enter your email address. *(Please be patient with us as we work out the kinks of this system; you may still receive a printed newsletter for a limited time after signing up.)*



# Join Audubon. Yes, I'd like to join! Please enroll me as a member



## Membership for 2012

Friend of Champaign County Audubon Society \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_  new  renewal  
(includes CCAS newsletter only)

Friend of CCAS and National Audubon Society \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes "Audubon" magazine & CCAS newsletter)

My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed, made **payable to Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS)**. Your information and NAS contribution will be forwarded to National.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ C2ZG500Z 7XCH

(Please provide 9-digit zip code)

Send this application and your check to: Champaign Co. Audubon Society, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana,

### CCAS Member Activities

#### & Benefits:

14 Audubon Adventures  
Classrooms  
Mini-grants to educators  
Kendeigh grants for scientific studies  
Great Backyard Bird Count  
Youth Bird Count Day  
Nature Shop at the Nature Center  
Meadowbrook prairie restoration  
Field trips, Annual Bird Counts  
Annual Birdathons  
Monthly member meetings  
Meadowlark Messenger

## Education Corner, Stacey Clementz

Education Program Specialist, Champaign County Forest Preserve District

### Enter the 2012 "Get-to-Know-Your-Wild-Neighbors" Contest

This contest invites youth (ages 18 and under) to get outside and create original works of art, writing, photography, videography and music inspired by nature. This year's theme is "Get to Know Your Wild Neighbors".

The goal is to be as creative as possible. Entrants will be able to win wild prizes, such as the opportunity to join dozens of other young winners from Canada and the US for a week-long 'Get to Know Art and Nature Camp' and much more. Visit <http://www.get-to-know.org/contest/us/> for more information and to submit your work.



## Fourth Annual Bird Migration Festival at Homer Lake April 28, 11 am to 4 pm

Bring your family and friends to Homer Lake to experience the sensations of spring and celebrate the migration season. We will have live birds of prey, crafts, hikes and more.

- Acclaimed local storyteller Kathe Brinkmann, 2 - 3 pm.
- Mist netting of birds with Jason Fisher, 11 am – 1 pm.
- Live birds of prey, 1 – 4 pm.



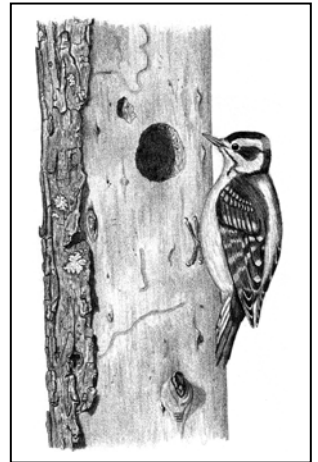
# *The Meadowlark Messenger*

April 2012, Vol.29: No.3

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Urbana, Illinois  
Permit No. 58

Champaign County Audubon Society  
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## Calendar of Events, April 2012

- Thursday April 5, 7 PM. General meeting** at Urbana Free Library Auditorium. **Brian Stearns** will present a program on **Birds of the Middle Fork Forest Preserve in Champaign County.**
- Sundays April 1 - May 27, 7:30-9 AM. Sunday morning bird walks** through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods began on March 4 and will continue every Sunday through May 27. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.
- Saturday April 14.** Tentative trip to **Middle Fork Fish & Wildlife Area.** Check website for details.
- Thursday April 19, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Fri.-Sun. April 20-22. Illinois Audubon Society Spring Gathering** in Danville, IL. at Danville Days Inn Hotel & Conference Center.
- Sunday April 22. EARTH DAY 2012. Mobilize the Earth.**
- Saturday April 28, 11 AM – 4 PM.** Bird Migration Festival. Homer Lake.

