



The Meadowlark Messenger

April 2014 • Volume 31, No. 3

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

Presidents' Column

Susan Stearns

Co-President of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)

Spring migration is here! Sunday morning bird walks are underway. The Bird Notes list serve is busy with reports of spring arrivals and other migrants passing through. Recent Woodcock Walks have been successful with stories of the woodcocks flying very close to people. Volunteer days at the Urbana Park District are underway. And last, but not least, the Champaign County Audubon Society is scheduling field trips again!

The first field trip of the spring season is April 12th. Brian Stearns will lead us on another trek through the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve (located in the northeast corner of Champaign County, just north of Penfield). If you attended the March program, you learned about the birds that Brian has photographed at the preserve over the years. He's even photographed a few more birds there since the March program. It was on this field trip last spring that we discovered where the resident pair of Sandhill Cranes was nesting. We're looking forward to another productive field trip.

Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center at 7:30 am and then drive to our home in Penfield. If it is more convenient for you to come straight to our home, be there at 8:00am - call 217-595-5052 for directions. We will be carpooling in SUVs from our home. If you would like to stay a full day, please pack a sack lunch (cold items can be refrigerated). Right now, the plan is to have lunch at

the house so that those who are not staying the full day can leave – but this is flexible depending on how the day goes and what people want to do.

The next field trip is April 26th for an afternoon at Heron Park at the north end of Lake Vermilion in Danville. April is a great month to visit Heron Park and to see herons nesting at the rookery, eagles, geese, swans, Sandhill Cranes, swallows, Red-winged Black birds – and the list goes on. The last few years, the resident pair of Sandhill Cranes has hatched a colt right around Earth Day, celebrated April 22. Of course, the challenge is always finding the nest. It gets harder to find with each year.

This month's program is Thursday, April 3rd at the Urbana Free Library. Kirby and Cindy Pringle will give a program, including a showing of their 22-minute documentary, on the drastic population decline of the monarch butterfly. Snacks will be provided.

If you are interested in taking on a bigger role with the Champaign County Audubon Society, we invite you to come to a board meeting. Board meetings are held at 7:15pm the 3rd Thursday of most months at the Nature Center. We have committee chairs working hard behind the scenes throughout the year, and we are always looking for new ideas and perspectives. If you are interested in learning how you can help out, please contact a member of our 2014 nominating committee: Janet Jokela (chair), Pam Leiter, and Caitlin Lill.

As always, thank you for supporting the Champaign County Audubon Society.

APRIL MEETING

Urbana Free Library
Auditorium

Thursday, April 3, 7 PM

Photographers and writers **Cindy and Kirby Pringle** of Tuscola, Illinois will present their acclaimed **Monarch Butterfly** documentary **"Plight of the Monarch"**.

They were among the first to sound the alarm about the sharp decline in the population of the **Monarch Butterfly**. Their film and book, **"The Butterfly that Would Not Fly"**, are their efforts to help the Monarch.



Milkweed is the only plant on which the Monarch Butterfly lays its eggs. It is the only plant on which the caterpillar feeds. As milkweed goes, so goes the Monarch Butterfly.

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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 Beth Chato

Migration is heating up with lots of waterfowl going through. Homer Lake and the South First Street Pond continue to be hot spots. Homer had Tundra and Trumpeter Swans. Woodcock are back. Sandhill Cranes have been flying over town. Busey Woods had another fly-over eagle. Other eagles have been spotted at Middle Fork, Homer, and Riverbend. A Snowy Owl was in Monticello, a Long-eared Owl at Parkland. Tree Swallows, Phobes, Rusty Blackbirds, and Eastern Bluebirds have also returned.

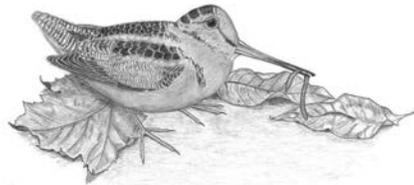
April Field Trips

Saturday, April 12 - Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, East Penfield. This will be a half-day field trip looking for spring migrants and returning summer residents. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center at 7:30 AM. Brian Stearns will lead. This will start as a morning field trip, but if anyone wants to continue in the afternoon they should bring a lunch.

Saturday, April 26 - Heron County Park, north end of Lake Vermilion in Danville. This will be an easy afternoon trip to the wetland boardwalk to observe the Blue Heron Rookery and other returning birds. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center at 12:30 PM. Charlene Anchor will lead.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks: March 30-May 25, 7:30-9AM.

Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods began on March 2 and will continue every Sunday through May 25. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot. Bring binoculars if you have them. Audubon members will be present to help beginners.



**WOODCOCK WALK
Meadowbrook Park
March 19**

About 15 people met at Meadowbrook Park at dusk for the Audubon/Urbana Park District's annual search for the elusive American Woodcock. We were well rewarded by a chance to see and hear the courtship flight of maybe a dozen woodcocks. Most were climbing high in the sky and then spiraling down on whistling wings. Several, however, flew low right over our heads. These displays should go on for a week or so. The woodcock are active just before sunrise and just before sunset if you want a chance to see and hear them.

**AUDUBON NATURE SHOP
for Unique Nature-Related Gifts**

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

SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Spring will soon be here. Maybe time for some new binoculars or a bird book. Do keep the shop in mind for birding and bird feeding equipment, natural history and children's books, puppets, and inexpensive small toys. Restocking is underway, so look for new items soon.

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) 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.)*

CONSERVATION CORNER - Helen Parker, Conservation Chair
Mahomet Aquifer

The first step in getting US EPA protection for the Mahomet Aquifer by designating it as a "Sole Source" aquifer has been taken: A proposal to designate has been made and public hearings will be held. The one in our area will be Tuesday May 13 at the Hilton Garden Inn (1501 S Neil, Champaign), meeting 6:30 pm, hearing 7:30 p.m. This designation should be a no-brainer, given that the aquifer IS our only source of drinking water (other than buying bottled water at the store!); but legally, I guess they have to hold a hearing to determine an obvious fact. It would not hurt to have a good crowd of thirsty citizens show up.

Pebble Mine, Alaska

The EPA has taken the first step toward banning the Pebble Mine in Alaska's Bristol Bay area, which has the potential to pollute the bay with mine waste for hundreds of years. This is just the first step, and the mining lobby will be fighting all the way, but it is at least a ray of hope for protection of the bay's incomparable wildlife.

Keystone XL

You commented--the State Department received about 2 million comments! Now they have to READ them--and will make a recommendation to the President. (I'm glad I don't work for them right now!) The process is expected to take about 4 months.

Sad Anniversary

Twenty-five (25) years ago, on March 24, 1989, The oil tanker Exxon Valdez hit a rock and sank in Prince William Sound, Alaska, spilling an estimated 11-32 million gallons/ 257,000-750,00 barrels of crude oil. It was the worst oil-related wildlife disaster in history up to that point, and some effects can still be seen today. I remember a cartoon that a friend of mine drew, showing the sinking ship and its associated oil slick in the background, while in the foreground a mermaid sitting on a rock is saying to a seal "Are they trying to make YOU mythical, too?"

New project

Cornell University, which operates "Project Feeder Watch" in which some of you probably participate, is starting a new "citizen science" project called "Project Nest Watch". The idea is that you record nesting activity for any nest that you can observe regularly. I don't have the proper e-mail/web address but searching under "Cornell University Project Nest Watch" should get you there if you are interested.

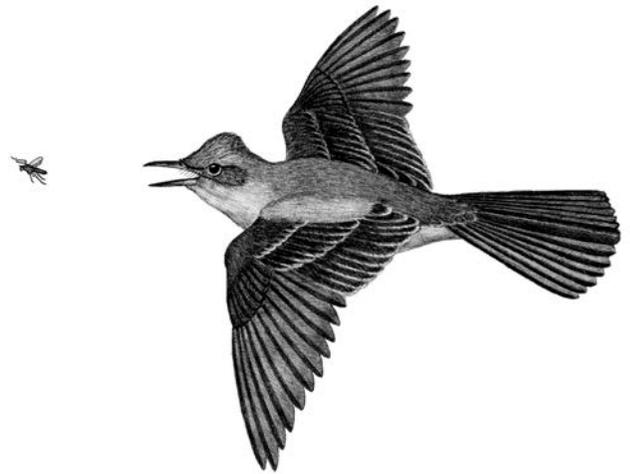
The Grace of Flycatchers in Flight

“Birds that are not flycatchers sometimes take insects in the air; they do it clumsily, but they get the bug. “

- **John Burroughs** from *Ways of Nature* (1905).

“Flycatchers are extremely agile upon the wing, and turn in the air with extraordinary facility, which enables them to catch the flying insects, of which their food largely consists. Their favorite method of feeding is to perch upon a post, stake, or leafless twig, and from this outlook watch for their prey, and then to sally forth and snap the luckless insect in midair, often with a sharp click of the bill and a sudden turn back toward the perch.”

-**T. Gilbert Pearson** from *Birds of America*



Friends of Champaign County Audubon, a reminder: All local Friends membership fees were due as of January 1. Your contribution of \$15 supports the local Chapter. Please renew or consider signing up on page 5 of this newsletter or send dues and membership information to our membership chair, Caitlin Lill, 607 West Vine Street, Champaign, IL 61820.

The Earth Care Team of First Presbyterian Church of Urbana invites you to attend a Three-Session Seminar Series on Sustainability and the Champaign County Land Resource Management Plan

The Problem: In Champaign County some of the world's most fertile soil is being converted from farmland to other uses. Each year between 1988 and 2005, an average of 563 acres of county farmland was taken out of production. Its new uses included 4,310 acres for residential development, 283 acres for industrial purposes, and 1,150 acres for commercial use.

Tackling the Problem: A Champaign County Land Resource Management Plan was adopted in 2010 after an Advisory Panel appointed by the Champaign County Board to assess the state of the environment in the county concluded that current development patterns are not sustainable and are damaging the County's natural environment and compromising its economic viability.

Purpose: This three-session seminar will examine the Management Plan and its attempt to foster sustainable development in the county. It will also consider how you and other county citizens can help ensure that recommendations of the plan are followed.

Dates, topics, and speakers are as follows:

- **March 30:** Gary Jackson, a former member of the Champaign County Board Environmental Advisory Panel, will summarize the findings of the panel and its recommendations. The report concluded that Champaign County lacked an over-all comprehensive plan, valuable soil resources were being converted to urban uses, and parkland acreage and open space fell short of national recommendations. Jackson also will provide a brief overview of the scope and content of the Land Resource Management Plan adopted by the county in 2010.
- **April 6:** Dan Olson, Executive Director of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, stewards of the county's natural and historic resources through conservation, education and compatible outdoor recreation experiences, will consider whether the Management Plan adequately protects the preserves from the negative impacts of discretionary development in adjacent areas and minimizes disturbance of their natural quality, habitat value, and aesthetic character. He also will point out ways in which citizens can be engaged in the long-term sustainability of the preserves.
- **April 13:** Susan Chavarria, Regional Planning Manager of the Champaign County Planning Commission, will explain the role of the commission in guiding development in Champaign County and review the Management Plan's anticipated future land use patterns. She will focus particularly on aspects of the plan intended to preserve prime agricultural land and encourage urban land use that is compact and contiguous to existing cities, villages, and unincorporated settlements.

The seminars will be held from 10:45 to 11:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church of Urbana, 602 West Green Street. The public is invited to attend.

Passenger Pigeons

2014: Centennial of a Species' Passing

As large as a pileated woodpecker, but sleeker, the passenger pigeon was built for speed, grace and maneuverability. In the mid-1800s an estimated 3-5 billion birds wandered the eastern half of the United States in huge flocks, finding and descending upon localized abundant masts of beechnuts and acorns to fuel their massive numbers.

Even after 100 years the story of the passenger pigeon can still inform today's conservation challenges . . . and even its successes.

Special Exhibit at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center

To learn more, please visit the 2014 special exhibit at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center, which opens on Saturday April 5. The exhibit will commemorate the 100-yr anniversary of the passenger pigeon's extinction, and will celebrate its unique ecology, physiology, and its historical relation to America's peoples.



Lecture on Raptor (Birds of Prey) Medicine

April 15, noon, at Large Animal Clinic Auditorium, College of Veterinary Medicine, South Lincoln Avenue, Urbana Dr. Michael Jones, University of Tennessee

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



Membership for 2014

		new	renewal
Friend of Champaign County Audubon Society	\$15.00.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>(includes CCAS newsletter only)</i>			
Friend of CCAS and National Audubon Society	\$20.00.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>(includes "Audubon" magazine & CCAS newsletter)</i>			

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: _____ C4ZG500Z
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ 7XCH
 (Please provide 9-digit zip code)

To receive newsletter electronically, please provide e-mail address:

Send this application and your check to: Champaign County Audubon Society, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

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, Homer Lake, sclementz@ccfpd.org

Attend one or more of the below programs to learn more about the local flora and fauna in your own backyard.

Pond Discovery, Saturday, April 26

2-3:30pm, Anita Purves Nature Center. All ages (under 15 with a registered adult). Investigate the extraordinary life that lurks in Busey Woods' seasonal ponds. Use nets, hand lenses and guides to help identify your discoveries. You may get wet, so dress for mess. Call 217-384-4062 to register and fee information.

Woodland Wildflower Hike, Saturday, May 3

1-2:30pm, Busey Woods. All ages (under 15 with registered adult). Engage all of your senses as you enjoy a guided hike to explore native plants and animals. There is always something new to see when we take the time to look. Hikes will take place rain or shine, so please dress accordingly. Call 217-384-4062 to register and fee information.

6th Annual Bird Migration Festival, Saturday, May 10

Salt Fork Center & Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve

- Mist Netting Demonstration: 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Interpretive Center
- Main Event & Live Raptors: 1 – 4 p.m., Salt Fork Center

Bring your family and friends to Homer Lake to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day and experience the sensations of spring! We will have live raptors (birds of prey), crafts, hikes, and more. There will be live entertainment from 2-3pm. FREE. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or cwalsh@ccfpd.org

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES : 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 12	Boneyard Creek Clean-up Day	9 am -12 noon	Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center
April 26	Perkins Road	1 - 3 pm.	Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road.



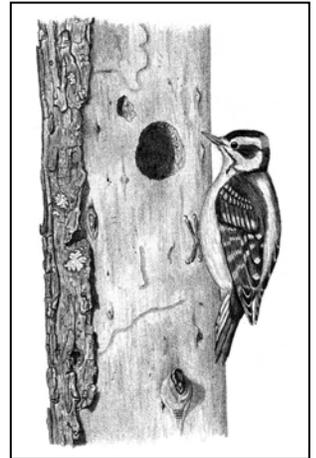
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Calendar of Events, April 2014

- Sundays** **March 30 – April 27, 7:30 - 9 AM.** Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods began on March 2 and will continue every Sunday through May 25. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot. Bring binoculars if you have them. Audubon members will be present to help beginners.
- Thursday** **April 3, 7 PM. Monthly meeting at Urbana Free Library.** Photographers and writers Cindy and Kirby Pringle of Tuscola, Illinois will present their acclaimed Monarch Butterfly documentary “Plight of the Monarch”.
- Saturday** **April 12, 7:30 AM. Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, East Penfield.** This will be a half-day field trip looking for spring migrants and returning summer residents. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center at 7:30 AM. Brian Stearns will lead. This will start as a morning field trip, but if anyone wants to continue in the afternoon they should bring a lunch.
- Thursday** **April 17, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Saturday** **April 26, 12:30 PM. Heron County Park, north end of Lake Vermilion in Danville.** This will be an easy afternoon trip to the wetland boardwalk to observe the Blue Heron Rookery and other returning birds. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.

