



The Meadowlark Messenger

June 2014 ♦ Volume 31, No. 5

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

Presidents' Column

Susan Stearns

Co-President of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)

Champaign County Audubon Society is busy wrapping things up in time for summer. Spring Bird Count and Bird-A-Thon numbers are getting tallied. Sunday morning bird walks at Busey Woods have come to an end until fall. The month of June has been planned.

We are sticking with tradition for the first event of the month. Do you remember our traditional June event? It is an evening of swallow watching and eating with friends at Homer Lake's Walnut Hill Shelter. We'll gather at 6:00pm to enjoy the camaraderie among bird watchers while observing the swallows at the dam. We move to the shelter about 6:30 for a potluck and more bird watching. We ask you to please bring your own table service, your own beverage, and a dish to share. Stay as long as you like as folks have been known to stay late enough to enjoy the evening sunset.

Our next event, planned for Saturday, June 21, at Lake of the Woods' Izaak Walton Cabin, is one with which you may not be familiar. We are hosting an Audubon Council of Illinois (ACI) meeting. I expect many of you may be unfamiliar with this council. The ACI consists of leaders and representatives from all Illinois chapters of the National

Audubon Society (NAS). The ACI offers three half-day conferences each year for the purpose of giving all Illinois chapters opportunities to meet together.

The day will begin at 9:30 am with coffee and donuts. The Izaak Walton Cabin sits nestled in the woods with a porch overlooking the Sangamon River making this the perfect time to sit on the porch enjoying the sights and sounds of the woods while getting to know other birders from throughout the state. At 10 am, the event gets underway and will last about 4 hours. We will share information about each chapter, giving everyone a fabulous opportunity to discuss ideas and learn from each other. Brian Stearns, co-president of CCAS and local wildlife photographer, will give his "Birds of the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve" presentation. His presentation continues to be a local favorite. Furthermore, we'll have lunch! CCAS will provide the meat and fixings for sandwiches. Our local chapter members are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share. CCAS is asking for a small donation at the event to help cover the cost of the meal.

This summer, remember to look for other local events to attend such as the CCAS-supported event Strawberry Jam, Urbana Park District's annual musical event at Meadowbrook Park on June 14. CCAS will wrap up the summer Thursday, September 4, with our

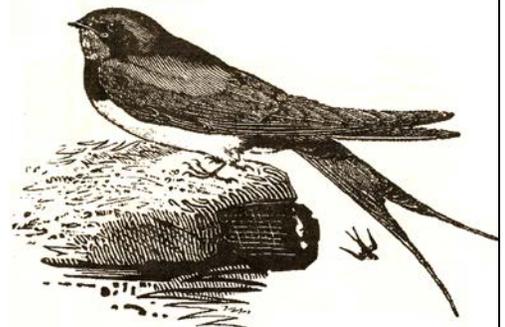
annual members' slide show and potluck at Lake of the Woods' Izaak Walton Cabin. Be on the lookout for more information in our next newsletter at the end of August.

As always, thank you for supporting and being a part of the Champaign County Audubon Society. Hope you enjoy your summer.

JUNE POTLUCK & SWALLOW WATCHING Thursday June 5 At Homer Lake Walnut Hill Shelter (next to dam)

**Please bring your own table service,
your own beverage and a dish to
share.**

**Watching begins at 6 pm
Potluck at 6:30 pm**



**"The Swallow "
Wood engraving by Thomas Bewick
from
A History of British Birds (1797)**

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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

Highlight of the month was a Black Vulture flying over Busey Woods on May 7. The Upland Sandpipers are back at the Monticello Field Station. Busey/Crystal Lake Park has been an exciting place for warbler watchers, with 35 species recorded. Weaver Park had a Virginia Rail. Two pairs of Black-necked Stilts were spotted on May 23 at the Monticello Field Station. As migration winds down, a notable sighting is of two separate Ruby-throated Hummingbirds nest building in Busey Woods.



SPRING BIRD COUNT: Saturday May 10.

Champaign County's list for the Statewide Spring Bird Count was 165 species. Thirty-eight people in 15 parties covered their assigned areas, traveling 70 miles on foot and 411 by car and spending 89 hours on foot and 18 by car. Special species needing documentation were Willet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Smith's Longspurs. Many thanks to all those who helped.

BIRD-A-THON (May 11-18) Results are in.

The Old-timers tour of Vermilion County netted 102 bird species. Highlights were a bittern, and Prairie Warbler and Henslow's Sparrows singing on territory. The Crazy Kayakers were barred from the river by high water, but found 86 species along the river by land. The Big Sitters found 45 species at Vermilion County's Heron Park topped off by a fly-over Bald Eagle just as they were leaving. Both the Urbana Park District and the Forest Preserve District put in extra effort to top their previous totals, with the Park District coming out ahead at 130 to the Forest Preserve's 122. The combined species total from all teams was 160.

There's still time to make a financial contribution. Please make checks payable to Champaign County Audubon Society and mail to CCAS, P.O. Box 882, Urbana IL, 61803. Your donation supports Illinois bird research in Champaign County through the Kendeigh grant program BIRD-A-THON

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

The Nature Shop has a selection of books to help you create a more wildlife friendly yard, as well a choice of many plant, bird and insect field guides. Visual and audio helps to learning birds and songs. Binoculars, feeders and much more, including a wide variety of children's story and activity books. 10% discount for all Audubon members. Remember us when gift shopping.

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.)

What Now for the Mahomet Aquifer?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is almost certain to designate the Mahomet aquifer as a "sole source" aquifer ("acknowledge" would be a more accurate term than "designate", but the legal form must be observed!). Even Governor Quinn appears to have gotten the message that a LOT of people care about this issue. So what government agencies can do apparently will get done. Unfortunately, at this point, the major threat is from a PRIVATE company, which says there isn't a problem because their liner won't leak. Yeah, sure. I have no idea what we, as ordinary concerned citizens can do. If I find out, I'll let you know.

Many cranes!

As of May 16, five of the Wisconsin Whooping Cranes had hatched out eight (8) chicks, and another 13 pairs were incubating! I think we can say with some confidence that this project is having a good year. The chicks are very cute; the pictures are on the Journey North website.

End of Illinois Legislative Session Nears.

Legally, the Illinois legislative session ends at the end of this month. This means it's rather a frantic time in Springfield, as everyone tries to get done what must be done. This end-of-session juggling is the way a lot of bad things find their way into bills. Fortunately the Illinois Environmental Council is working very hard to stay on top of things. If there is anything that we must know and act on, they will let us know. Anything that occurs after tomorrow won't make it to this newsletter, but I'll try to get any "must do" items onto the CCAS website.

THE VIREOS OF SUMMER

I descend a steep hill, and approach the hemlocks through a large sugar-bush. When twenty rods distant, I hear all along the line of the forest the incessant warble of the **Red-eyed Vireo**, cheerful and happy as the merry whistle of a schoolboy. He is one of our most common and widely distributed birds. Approach any forest at any hour of the day, in any kind of weather, from May to August, in any of the Middle or Eastern districts, and the chances are that the first note you hear will be his. Rain or shine, before noon or after, in the deep forest or in the village grove, when it is too hot for the thrushes or too cold and windy for the warblers, it is never out of time or place for this little minstrel to indulge his cheerful strain. In the deep wilds of the Adirondacks, where few birds are seen and fewer heard, his note was almost constantly in my ear. Always busy, making it a point never to suspend for one moment his occupation to indulge his musical taste, his lay is that of industry and contentment. There is nothing plaintive or especially musical in his performance, but the sentiment expressed is eminently that of cheerfulness.

The **Red-eye** is classed among the flycatchers by some writers, but is much more of a worm-eater, and has few of the traits or habits of the *Muscicapa* or the true *Sylvia*. He resembles somewhat the warbling vireo, and the two birds are often confounded by careless observers. Both warble in the same cheerful strain, but the latter more continuously and rapidly. The **Red-eye** is a larger, slimmer bird, with a faint bluish crown, and a light line over the eye. His movements are peculiar. You may see him hopping among the limbs, exploring the under side of the leaves, peering to the right and left, now flitting a few feet, now hopping as many, and warbling incessantly, occasionally in a subdued tone, which sounds from a very indefinite distance: When he has found a worm to his liking, he turns lengthwise of the limb and bruises its head with his beak before devouring it.

From *In the Hemlocks* by **John Burroughs** (1910).



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, P.O.Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882.

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL by John Burroughs

As the shadows deepen and the stars begin to come out, the Whip-Poor-Will suddenly strikes up. What a rude intrusion upon the serenity and harmony of the hour! A cry without music, insistent, reiterated, loud, penetrating, and yet the ear welcomes it; the night and the solitude are so vast that they can stand it; and when, an hour later, as the night enters into full possession, the bird comes and serenades me under my window or upon my doorstep, my heart warms toward it. Its cry is a love-call, and there is something of the ardor and persistence of love in it, and when the female responds, and comes and hovers near, there is an interchange of subdued, caressing tones between the two birds that it is a delight to hear. During my first summer in my cabin one bird used to strike up every night from a high ledge of rocks in front of my door. At just such a moment in the twilight he would begin, the first to break the stillness. Then the others would follow, till the solitude was vocal with their calls. They are rarely heard later than ten o'clock. Then at daybreak they take up the tale again, whipping poor Will till one pities him.

One day in May, walking in the woods, I came upon the nest of a Whip-Poor-Will, or rather its eggs, for it builds no nest – two elliptical whitish spotted eggs lying upon the dry leaves. My foot was within a yard of the mother bird before she flew. I wondered what a sharp eye would detect curious or characteristic in the ways of the bird, so I came to the place many times and had a look. It was always a task to separate the bird from her surroundings, though I stood within a few feet of her, and knew exactly where to look. One had to bear on with his eye, as it were, and refuse to be baffled. The sticks and leaves, and bits of black or dark-brown bark, were all exactly copied in the bird's plumage. And then she did sit so close, and simulate so well a shapeless, decaying piece of wood or bark! Twice I brought a companion, and, guiding his eye to the spot, noted how difficult it was for him to make out there, in full view upon the dry leaves, any semblance to a bird. When the bird returned after being disturbed, she would alight within a few inches of her eggs, and then, after a moment's pause, hobble awkwardly upon them.



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.



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



Membership for 2014

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

Friend of CCAS and National Audubon Society \$20.00..... new renewal
(includes "Audubon" magazine & CCAS newsletter)

Donation to Champaign County Audubon Society

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

Free 4-Part Video Series: Bird ID Secrets

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has put together a four-part Inside Birding video series that will walk you through the four basic keys to identifying any bird: Size & Shape, Color Pattern, Behavior, and Habitat. The videos take you out in the field with Chris Wood and Jessie Barry, two members of Team Sapsucker for clear, fun, one-on-one instruction. <<http://goo.gl/GoHzbj>><http://goo.gl/GoHzbj>

Bird ID App for your Smartphone

Answer five simple questions about a bird you are trying to identify and the Merlin Bird ID app will come up with a list of possible matches. It offers quick identification help for beginning and intermediate bird watchers to learn about North America's most common birds. It is now available on iPhone/iPad and will be available soon for Android.

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:**

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------|--|
| June 14 | Weaver Park | 1- 3 pm. | Turn right into park at entrance on East Main near Smith Road. |
| June 28 | Meadowbrook | 9-11 am. | Meet at Race Street parking lot. |
| | Perkins Road | 1 -3 pm. | Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road. |
| July 12 | Busey Woods | 9-11 am. | Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center |
| | Weaver Park | 1 -3 pm. | Turn right into park at entrance on East Main near Smith Road. |
| July 26 | Meadowbrook | 9-11 am. | Meet at Race Street parking lot. |
| | Perkins Road | 1- 3 pm. | Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road. |



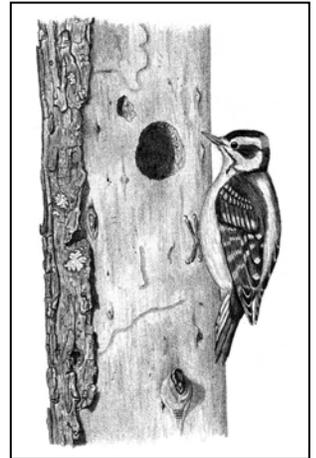
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Calendar of Events, June 2014

- Thursday June 5, 6 PM. JUNE POTLUCK & SWALLOW WATCHING** at Homer Lake Walnut Hill Shelter. Please bring your own table service, your own beverage and a dish to share. Watching begins at 6 PM, potluck at 6:30 PM.
- Saturday June 14, 4 PM- dusk. Urbana Park District's "STRAWBERRY JAM" at Meadowbrook Park.** Sponsored in part by Champaign County Audubon Society.
- Saturday June 21, 5:51 AM. SUMMER SOLSTICE.**
June 21, 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM. AUDUBON COUNCIL OF ILLINOIS meeting at Lake of the Woods' Izaak Walton cabin.

The next *Meadowlark Messenger* will be the September newsletter.

