



The Meadowlark Messenger

May 2014 • Volume 31, No. 4

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

Presidents' Column

Susan Stearns

Co-President of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)"

I hope all of you are enjoying the warmer weather. I sure do hope there are no more unexpected dustings of snow like the one we had in mid-April just days after the daffodils started blooming – we do always have at least one cold snap in late April. None-the-less, as April showers – and snows - are bringing May flowers, CCAS is looking forward to a busy month ahead.

Our first event of the month is Thursday, May 1st, 7:00 pm at the Urbana Free Library. To celebrate the ending of an academic year, each May we invite the Kendeigh Grant recipients from the previous year to share their research with us. The 2013 recipients are Christina Roy, for her study on Vectors of Lyme Disease and Tyson Dallas, for his study on Ecology of Red-Headed Woodpeckers. Please join us May 1st to show your support for ornithological research.

About the Kendeigh Fund

Dr. Kendeigh, eminent ornithologist and renowned professor of zoology at the University of Illinois, was a charter member, president, and board member of CCAS. The Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh Memorial Fund was created in 1982 and has since funded over \$30,000 of research on Illinois birds. Each year, CCAS offers two grants for research in ornithology in Illinois for a maximum of \$1000 each.

Our next event is a field trip to Homer Lake. Beth Chato and Jim Smith will lead this field trip Saturday, May 3rd. As usual, we will meet at Anita Purves Nature Center and caravan to Homer Lake.

The following Saturday, May 10th, is the 39th Annual Illinois Spring Bird Count. Participants record all birds seen or heard, along with the number of hours they spend "owling" (pre-dawn hours), the number of hours spent looking for birds during the day, the number of miles driven in a car, and the number of miles walked. This statewide event is organized by county. CCAS would love to have your help counting birds throughout Champaign County. If you would like to participate, please contact Beth Chato at (217) 344-6803 or jbchato@uiuc.edu.

Immediately following the Spring Bird count is the annual CCAS Bird-a-thon. During this week-long event, members obtain pledges from friends and neighbors and try to see as many bird species as possible. This event is our primary fundraiser for supporting research through the Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh Memorial Fund.

Wow, so many events in such a short amount of time. But don't worry - there's more! Don't forget about the Sunday Morning Bird Walks, held every Sunday in May. That is four more opportunities to walk alongside experienced birders through Busey Woods this spring.

You never know what you'll see or learn. After that fourth Sunday, there are no more Sunday Morning Bird Walks until September.

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

MAY MEETING

Urbana Free Library
Auditorium

Thursday, May 1 at 7pm

The 2013 recipients of
Kendeigh grants from
Champaign County Audubon
Society

Christine Roy

will discuss her research on
**Avian life history factors that
influence infestation by ticks**



Tyson Dallas

will discuss his research on
**Habitat use and nest-site
selection of the Red-headed
Woodpecker**



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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

Eared Grebe at Arcola Marsh. Shorebirds are going though: Golden Plovers in several locations as well as Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs. Warblers returning: Yellow-rumps, Yellow-throated, and Parula. White-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers in Busey Woods!



SPRING BIRD COUNT: Saturday May 10.

Champaign County Observers are needed for all or any part of the day. This will be the 39nd annual statewide bird census. Counting county by county during the peak of migration creates a valuable one-day snapshot of what is where on a given day in May each year. Last year's County total was 161 species. Experience is helpful but not essential. Contact Beth Chato 344-6803.

May Field Trip

Saturday, May 3 -Homer Lake Forest Preserve. This will be a 1/2 day field trip. Various habitats will be searched looking for migrants, returning summer residents and waterfowl. Meet either at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot at 7:30 AM, or at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center (the former Environmental Education Center) parking lot just inside the main gate at 8:00 AM. Beth Chato and Jim Smith will be leading.

Sunday Morning Bird Walks: May 4 - 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.



BIRDATHON

Champaign Count Audubon's annual fundraiser for our Kendeigh Fund Scholarships for bird studies in Illinois will take place during the week of May 11 to 18. Choose a team and pledge for the number of bird species they observe (See insert).

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

Beth's favorite reference book: Crossley ID Guide. A choice of many bird field guides. Identi-flyer Lyric, a great way to learn bird songs. Binoculars, feeders and much more. A variety of new children's books. 10% discount for all Audubon members.

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
Kickapoo rail-trail construction to begin

According to the News-Gazette, work will begin on the first portion of the Kickapoo "rail-trail" which is projected to eventually run from Urbana to Danville along long-abandoned railroad track; this first section will run from Urbana to St. Joseph. Trail construction is not cheap, and there will be various fund-raisers as the project proceeds. The trail will provide great opportunities for outdoor activity!

Wind vs. Flying creatures

Make no mistake - we NEED wind power as part of a sustainable energy future. And wind farms are sprouting up like weeds after a rain. However--there are downsides to these great windmills: where the wind blows, birds fly. The problem can be especially acute in some areas of the west where golden eagles hunt, court, and nest. Even closer to home, migrating birds and bats may well be sucked into the vortex of air created by the turning blades. The exact kill numbers are unknown, but may well be substantial.

Improvements may be on the way--some newer designs are expected to have less impact. But the most important thing is designing projects that are "smart from the start" -- they should be located in areas with little habitat value, should be built near enough to cities that existing transmission lines and roads can be used, and should include measures that protect or restore habitat and ecosystems to compensate for unavoidable impacts on wildlife.

Idaho declares war on wolves

The state of Idaho wants to kill 450 wolves - close to 3/4 of the state's population. After all, wolves are carnivores--they kill things like deer and elk that some people want to kill themselves, and some hunters don't want any non-human competition. Wolves will also take sheep that are not adequately guarded--there are non-lethal ways of dealing with that problem, but they require a certain amount of work and adjustment of habits. Somehow it does not seem right to me that the effect of removing wolves from the endangered species list is to let people kill enough of them to perhaps need to put them back on the list! The truth is that carnivores are a necessary part of a functioning ecosystem. Learn a little biology, people!

Mahomet Aquifer

The US Environmental Protection Agency is recommending that our aquifer be granted "sole source" designation. (See previous newsletters on this!) At any rate, there will be a couple of public hearings in May, including one in Champaign: Tuesday May 13 at Hilton Garden Inn, 1501 S Neil, Champaign, with an information session from 6:30-7:15 pm and a public hearing/comment session, 7:30 pm to ??? Your presence would be helpful.

Illinois to import prairie chickens from Kansas

Prairie Chickens in Illinois nearly went extinct a few years ago. Their numbers were reduced to so few birds that they suffered serious inbreeding, and the choice was to lose the species or import some more birds from elsewhere. The current plan is to bring in 300 birds from Kansas over a span of six years, 50 birds at a time. We hope that this will restore this quintessential prairie species to our grasslands!

From the Illinois Prairies in May to the Arctic Tundra in June

“Presently I saw some plovers skimming over the ground in advance of me, or alighting upon tussocks of moss and uttering a soft warbling call. They proved to be **Golden Plovers**; I had evidently invaded their breeding grounds, and they were making their musical protest. At times the males, as they circled about me, warbled in the most delightful manner. There was in it, underneath its bright joyousness, a tone of soft pleading and entreaty that was very moving – the voice of the tundra, soft, alluring, plaintive, beautiful. The **Golden Plover** is mottled black and white with a rich golden tinge on its back. It is a wonderful flyer. We found it near the Arctic Circle; six months later, probably the same birds might have been found in Patagonia.”

- from *Far and Near* by John Burroughs



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.

6th ANNUAL BIRD MIGRATION FESTIVAL

Salt Fork Center & Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2573 S.
Homer Lake Rd, Homer
Saturday, May 10

Mist Netting Demonstration: 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Interpretive Center

Main Event & Live Raptors: 1 - 4 p.m., Salt Fork Center

Kathleen Brinkman Storytelling: 2-3 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.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED; PLEASE HELP.



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.

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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

New All About Bird Biology Site

Feathers are amazing: they're light, aerodynamic, beautifully patterned, colorful, waterproof, and warm. To help curious minds of all ages learn about feathers, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology just launched an in-depth website. The website includes free PowerPoint downloads, reference articles and custom art and videos.

<http://biology.allaboutbirds.org/>

Two New Owl Cams

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has just added two new owl cams; a Barn Owl in Texas and a Wild Birds Unlimited Barred Owl cam in Indiana. Visit cams.allaboutbirds.org to watch the live feeds.

Soar Through the Standards

is a 5-part webinar series that combines bird biology with Next Generation Science Standards. Participants who take all five have the option to earn a professional development credit. There's a summer session offered both July 17 and August 21. <http://www.birdsleuth.org/webinar-series/>



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:**

May 10 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.



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Urbana, Illinois
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Calendar of Events, May 2014

- Thursday May 1, 7 PM. Monthly meeting at Urbana Free Library.** Recipients of the 2013 Kendeigh grants will present their research findings.
Tyson Dallas: *Habitat Use and Nest-Site Selection of the Red-headed Woodpecker*
Christine Roy: *Avian Life History Factors that Influence Infestation by Ticks*
- Saturday May 3, 7:30 AM. Homer Lake field trip.** This will be a half-day field trip. Various habitats will be searched looking for migrants, returning summer residents and waterfowl. Meet either at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot at 7:30 AM, or at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center (the former Environmental Education Center) parking lot just inside the main gate at 8:00 AM. Beth Chato and Jim Smith will be leading.
- Sundays May 4 – May 25, 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.
- Saturday May 10, all day. Spring Bird Count,** the 39th annual statewide bird census. Contact Beth Chato.
11 AM – 5 PM. Sixth Annual Bird Migration Festival at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.
- Sun – Sun May 11– May 18. Birdathon.** Champaign County Audubon's annual fundraiser for our Kendeigh Fund Scholarships for bird studies in Illinois
- Thursday May 15. 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.



**Your pledges needed for our 31st
AUDUBON BIRDATHON: WEEK of MAY 11-18**

During Birdathon Week teams will eagerly search our woods, parks and fields for all the different birds species they can find. Pledge donations are based on the number of species seen by your selected team. This year's teams, with last year's totals, are listed below.

1. Old-timers tour Vermilion County
Jim Smith, Beth Chato
106 species

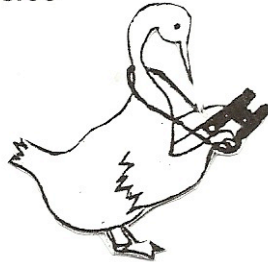
2. The Big Sit: Charlene Anchor, Beez
Gordon and friends
All the species seen from 1 spot

3. Urbana Park Rangers:
Director Tim Bartlett
Judy Miller & staff- 119 species

4. Forest Preserve Rangers:
Director Dan Olson
Dan Olson & Staff- 94 species

5. Krazy Kayakers:
Peter & Betsy Kuchinke
50 species

6. Form your own team.
Choose your favorite spot!



**OUR BIRDS ARE IN TROUBLE. YOU CAN HELP
YOUR BIRDATHON CONTRIBUTIONS FUND ILLINOIS BIRD RESEARCH**

through Memorial Scholarships in honor of Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh, one of the first true ecologists and a founder of Champaign County Audubon.

PLEDGE FORM

Please return this pledge form to:
Champaign County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 882, Urbana, Ill., 61803

_____ I pledge _____ per species seen team _____

_____ I will make a flat donation of _____ to help the cause.