



The Meadowlark Messenger

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www.ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

President's Column

Barbara Schleicher

At the April Audubon Program, we had a special presenter from Purdue University, Jeff Lucas. He is a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and specializes in animal communication, sensory ecology, hearing and call complexity in birds, and use of dynamic game theory in animal behavior. Professionally, I am a Landscape Architect and assistant manager of the University of Illinois' Plant Biology Conservatory and Collections. I am also a Champaign County Master Gardener.

Jeff's program was entitled, *What We Miss when We Listen to Bird Song: the Hearing Side of Avian Communication*. If you were not able to come to this program, I have highlighted some of the interesting information he presented:

- Birds typically have hearing capabilities that match their vocal signals. Tufted titmice, for example, have excellent high frequency hearing which matches their use of an alarm call that is sung at about 8 kHz.
- Woodland birds tend to have tonal, low frequency songs (e.g. the titmouse). They also have an auditory system that specializes in the processing of tones.
- Open-adapted species tend to have high frequency songs with rapid elements (trills, etc). They have an auditory system that specializes in the processing of rapid information, but that causes them not to be terrific at the processing of tones.
- Sex differences can show similar trends. Cowbird females have ears that are similar to those of woodland birds, and cowbird males have ears that are similar to those of open-adapted birds.
- There can be substantial seasonal changes in the ability of a bird to process sound. Chickadees, for example, are better at processing tones in the spring than in the fall -- this is consistent with their using very tonal songs.

- Some of these patterns are not shown by sparrows -- in particular, sparrows with high frequency elements in their songs do not necessarily have good high frequency hearing. Instead, we found that sparrows with complex songs that have very different elements (e.g. song sparrows, white-crowned sparrows) have exquisite high-frequency hearing, whereas birds that sing mostly trills or simple elements tend not to have particularly good high-frequency hearing. This suggests that the information in the high-frequency elements of trills is redundant with the information at low frequencies, and that the bird primarily processes the information at low frequencies.

The bottom line is that a spectrogram, which we use extensively to understand bird song, may not be a true reflection of what a bird hears. In addition, what a bird hears may change seasonally.

Special thanks to Jim Nardi for contacting Jeff Lucas for this event. Special thanks to Dorothy Neumann for putting together a great series of presentations for the Champaign County Audubon Society's public programs. ■

MAY MEETING

*Urbana Free Library Auditorium
Thursday, May 7 at 7pm
The 2014 Kendeigh Grant Recipients*

Amber Weingart - *"Conserving a Charismatic Grassland Species in Illinois: The Barn Owl"*

Bryan Reiley - *"Benefits of Restored Habitats for Declining Shrubland Birds"*

Amber Weingart will discuss her research investigating Barn Owl use of nest boxes, learning how they select their nest sites, determining factors correlated with nest survival, and testing playback surveys as a method of detection. Amber is currently a master's student at the U of I.

Bryan Reiley will discuss his research in which he investigated the microhabitat, landscape, and biological factors affecting nest success of Bell's Vireo and Willow Flycatcher, two declining species of concern in Illinois. Bryan Reiley is currently a PhD student at the U of I.

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Congratulations to the 2015 Kendeigh Grant recipients: Shelby Cheski and Cassandra Wilcoxon.

Shelby Chesko is a student at Millikin University working towards a B.S. in Biology with an environmental emphasis. The goal of her research is to determine if certain species of central Illinois raptors are more likely to be found with lead poisoning and to identify what landscape and human land use practices are associated with where lead-poisoned birds are found. The grant funds awarded to her will cover the costs of reagent kits needed for detecting lead toxicity in birds and the needles required for collecting blood samples.

Cassandra Wilcoxon is a student at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign working towards a Masters of Science in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. The goal of her research is to identify which farming practices are more beneficial to birds so that farmers can be advised how to best accommodate wildlife in their farming practices. Her project stems from the Franklin Research and Demonstration Farm Project located in Lexington, Illinois. The grant funds awarded to her will cover the costs of repeated trips to 25 sites throughout Livingston, McLean, Logan, and Champaign counties as well as batteries for a GPS unit and paper supplies. ■

NATURE SHOP: at the Anita Purves Nature Center, 9am-4pm Monday-Saturday. Your source for nature related items for young and old. Illinois Wildflowers by Don Kurz is an excellent and beautiful aid to identifying spring blooms. Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds is a good choice for the less experienced birder. Sibley's Field Guide to Eastern Birds is excellent for more advanced birders. Mike Jefford and Susan Post have a new book on Illinois Butterflies as well as their Exploring the Nature of Illinois. All shop proceeds go for environmental conservation and education.

BIRD NOTES: Migration is heating up with a variety of warblers: Orange-crowned, Yellow, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Palm, Louisians Waterthrush, and most notably a Cerulean in Heritage Park. White Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorants have been seen on the wing. Shore birds are beginning to appear. A Whip-poor-will called in a backyard, and an early Ruby-throated Hummingbird was reported. Sunday morning bird walks continue in Busey Woods/Crystal Lake Park, meeting at the Anita Purves Nature Center at 7:30 am.

SPRING BIRD COUNT: Saturday, May 9. This will be the 40th annual statewide bird census. Last year's county total was 164 species. If you'd like to participate, please contact Beth Chato 344-6803 or ejchato@gmail.com. Experience is helpful but not essential.

Conservation News

-Jeff Peyton

Dangerous Mercury Levels in Ivory Gulls

A study from the University of Saskatchewan of feather samples from Ivory Gull specimens has found that amounts of mercury accumulated by the birds have increased over the past 150 years to nearly fifty times their 19th century levels. Human activities that result in release of mercury into the environment disproportionately affect animals high in the food chain – with their diet of fish and occasional carrion from marine mammal carcasses, Ivory Gulls are in a vulnerable position. The birds’ population has decreased more than 80% since the 1980s, and they are listed by Canada as endangered. Mercury has been found to have damaging effects on birds’ breeding success rates, and is likely partially responsible – along with climate change and other human activities – for the gulls’ dramatic decline.

Bobcat Hunting Legislation

A bill to remove the ban on hunting and trapping of bobcats in Illinois was vetoed last year by Pat Quinn, but has been re-introduced to the legislature for another attempt at passage. The bill, HB352/SB106, has already passed in the state house, but with a much narrower margin than last year. From districts in Champaign county, Carol Ammons and Bill Mitchell opposed legalizing bobcat hunting, but Adam Brown and Chad Hays supported it. Killing bobcats has been banned in Illinois since 1972 when the population was at dangerously low levels, and bobcats remained on the threatened species list until 1999. Because of the hunting ban and other conservation efforts, numbers have begun to recover, particularly in southern Illinois, and various population estimates range from around 3000 to 5000 bobcats statewide. The Sierra Club, both Illinois and National Humane Society, and the Illinois Environmental Council all oppose legalizing bobcat hunting. At the time of this publication, the Illinois Senate has not yet voted on the bill. ■



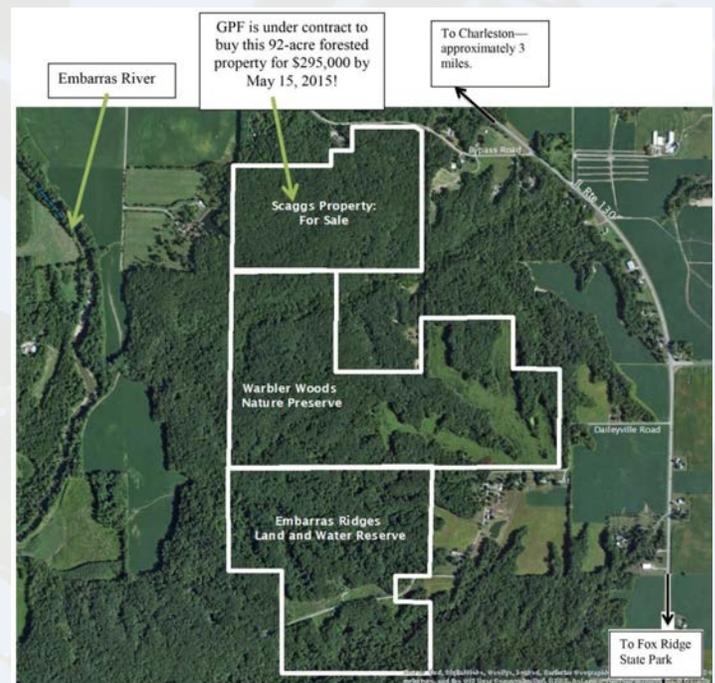
Help Conserve Important Bird Habitat in Coles County

-Pam Leiter

Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) is working to conserve 92 acres of prime bird habitat just south of Charleston, Illinois. Currently called Scaggs Woods, this purchase on May 15, 2015 would result in conservation of a contiguous 435 acres of mature woodlands along the Embarras River when added to Warbler Woods Nature Preserve and the Embarras Ridges Land and Water Reserve – both already owned, protected and managed by GPF.

Such habitat is very important to bird species, especially those dependent on non-fragmented woodland habitats. Visit www.grandprairiefriends.org to learn more about how you can help.

Thank you for your support for bird habitat! ■



Bird Migration Festival ~ Saturday, May 16, 1-4pm ~ Homer Lake Forest Preserve Salt Fork Center and Interpretive Center

Bring your family and friends to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day and experience the sensations of Spring. See live birds up close during the mist netting demonstration. The main event will have live raptors, crafts, hikes and more. Live entertainment from 2-3pm. **FREE.** For more info: (217) 896-2455 or cwalsh@ccfpd.org.

BeeSpotter

Mark your calendar for the first annual BeeBlitz during National Pollinator Week. Nature lovers and concerned citizens in Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio are invited to get outside, snap pictures of bees on Sunday, June 21st, and upload their findings to BeeSpotter, the citizen science project run in collaboration between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Department of Entomology and The Office for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education.

Since its launch in 2007, BeeSpotter has been monitoring bee populations in parts of the Midwest using photographic data collected by citizen scientists, or bee spotters. Bee populations have seen dramatic declines in recent decades due to pesticides, habitat loss, and colony collapse disorder. According to a fact sheet entitled, "The Economic Challenge Posed by Declining Pollinator Populations", released by the White House in June 2014, bees pollinate more than 35% of the crops grown in the world. This ecological service is estimated to be worth billions of dollars domestically each year.

Thanks to loyal bee spotters, BeeSpotter does have some good news to report. *Bombus affinis*, the rare "rusty-patched" bumble bee has been seen in Illinois for the last seven years in a row. This bee was once prolific in North America but sightings of it are now exceedingly rare in the Midwest. Likewise, the red-belted *Bombus rufocinctus*, was thought to have disappeared from Illinois in 1949. In fact, when BeeSpotter started, *Bombus rufocinctus* wasn't even included in the list of local bees. Bee spotters have been invaluable in tracking *Bombus rufocinctus*' return to Illinois and has raised hopes that it is making a comeback.

Help BeeSpotter continue to monitor rare bee populations and others by participating in the BeeBlitz. Visit your own garden, or take a walk through a park, and take photos of any busy bees you see. Upload your spottings to BeeSpotter and be part of the pollinator conservation effort – all from your own back yard.

For more information, visit <http://beespotter.org/beeblitz>

Field Trips

A group of 9 enjoyed a gorgeous day exploring the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve Saturday, April 18. Participants enjoyed finding a killdeer nest, viewing the eagles' nest from afar, and observing one of the resident eagles drying out on his favorite perch. Red headed woodpeckers and about 30 cormorants were spotted. ■



Picture by Susan Stearns. From left to right: Mark Koster, Karan Keith, Dorey Panno, Jan Houston, Deanna Uphoff, Beth Chato, Allan Penwell, Brian Stearns, and dogs Scout & Banjo.

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:

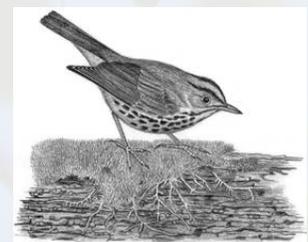
May 9 Busey Woods 9-11 am. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center
Weaver Park 1-3 pm. Turn right into park at entrance on East Main near Smith Road.

Renewing members:
David Skadden & Kim Smith
Jackie Wilen
Joyce Hofmann
Pam Leiter
Mike & Jane McCulley
Sue & Ron Kiddoo
Randi G. Lundstedt
Richard Bishop
Jean Weigel
Marilyn Wojnar
Jana Mason
Ed & Beez Gordon
Iris & Burt Swanson
Jacqueline Worden
Frank A. Medlen, Sr.
Jennifer Hines
James Hoyt

New members:
Randi G. Lundstedt
Nancy Snellen
Dorey Panno

Thank you to our renewing members. Welcome to our new members!

Don't see your name and think you should? Contact our membership chair **Caitlin Lill**.



Support Ornithological Research in Illinois!

Your pledges are needed for
Champaign County Audubon Society's
32nd Annual Birdathon: week of May 10 – 17, 2015

The CCAS Birdathon is Champaign County Audubon Society's annual fundraiser for our Kendeigh Fund Grants given to support bird studies in Illinois.

Last year's Birdathon raised \$1013.80 and CCAS awarded \$2,000 in grants. This year our goal is to raise \$1,600.

Since its beginning 32 years ago, the Charles S. Kendeigh Research Grant project has funded about \$30,000 worth of research 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 to the prestigious careers in the natural history field.

Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh, eminent ornithologist, was a renowned professor of Zoology at the University of Illinois. He was a charter member, president, and board member of CCAS, 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. Perhaps Dr. Kendeigh's most enduring contribution was a standard method for censusing birds.

During Birdathon Week teams eagerly search our woods, parks and fields for all the different bird species they can find. Pledge donations are based on the number of species seen by your selected team. Typical pledges range from 5 cents to \$1.00 per species.

Ways to Participate

1. Make a one-time donation. If you'd like you may give your donation on behalf of a team.
2. Sponsor a team by pledging a small amount per species the team finds.
3. Form a team of your own and make a donation on behalf of your team.
4. Form a team of your own and pledge a small amount per species you find.
5. Form a team of your own and ask your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to pledge a small amount for each species you find.

This Year's Teams

Oldtimers Tour Champaign County

Jim Smith, Beth Chato
102 species last year

Krazy Kayakers

Peter and Betsy Kuchinke
86 species last year

The Big Sit

Charlene Anchor,
Beez Gordon and Friends
All the species seen from one spot
45 species last year

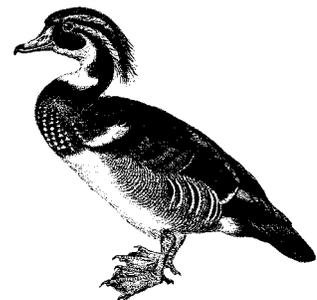
The Two Big Rivals

Urbana Park Rangers

Director Tim Bartlett
Judy Miller & staff
130 species last year

Forest Preserve Rangers

Director Dan Olson
Dan Olson & staff
123 species last year



New Teams for 2015

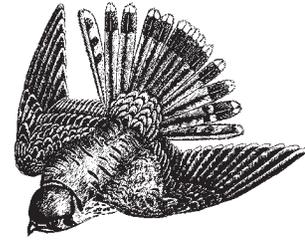
Big Day

Greg Lambeth & friends
100 + species likely

The Northeast Corner

Brian & Susan Stearns
40 + species likely

Our birds are in trouble. You can help.
Your Birdathon contributions fund Illinois bird research through memorial grants in honor of
Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh, one of the first true ecologists and a founder of
Champaign County Audubon Society.



PLEDGE FORM

Please return this pledge form and one-time donations to:
Champaign County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882
Pledges may be emailed to susancstearns@gmail.com with Birdathon in the subject line.
Pledges are due by Saturday, May 9, 2015.

I have enclosed a one-time donation in the amount of \$ _____ to help the cause
on behalf of team _____.

I pledge _____ per species seen by team _____.

List team member names if forming a new team: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

eMail Address: _____

All donations for the Birdathon are tax deductible.

Bird species list and team sponsor pledge forms are available online at
<http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org> or call Susan Stearns at 217-595-5052.

Past Kendeigh Grant Recipients

2015 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Shelby Chesko, "Quantification of Lead in Central Illinois Birds of Prey"
Cassandra A. Wilcoxon, "Cover crops in agricultural landscape: beneficial to birds during spring migration?"

2014 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Amber Wingert, "Conserving a Charismatic Grassland Species in Illinois: The Barn Owl"
Bryan Reiley, "Benefits of Restored Habitats for Declining Shrubland Birds"

2013 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Christine Roy, "Avian life history factors that influence infestation by ticks"
Tyson Dallas, "Habitat use and nest-site selection of the Red-headed Woodpecker"

2012 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Valerie Buxton, "Grassland Birds in Illinois"
Tyson Dallas, "Habitat Use and Demography of Red-headed Woodpeckers"

2011 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Sarah Cleeton, "Assessing the responses of woodland songbirds to exotic shrub invasions in the Chicago area"
Kelly VanBeek, "Effects of alternative tillage practices on bird populations in Illinois"

2010 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
E. Keith Bowers, "Sex allocation in a polygamous bird: the House Wren"
Travis Wilcoxon, "Immune function, physiology and reproductive success in Illinois Songbirds"

2009 Kendeigh Grant Recipients
Jen Sutherland, "How diet influences the health of nestling house wrens"
Jason Fischer, "To feed or not to feed? People who feed birds and what bird feeding means for urban birds"



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

Membership for 2015

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

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: _____

C5ZG500Z

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

7XCH

Email: _____

Yes, I'd like to receive the newsletter electronically

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 Bird-a-thons*
- Monthly member meetings*
- Meadowlark Messenger*
- Advocate for conservation causes*

Education Corner, May 2015

Hooray for Hummingbirds!

The start of spring is the perfect time to inspire young bird lovers and budding nature enthusiasts to join Audubon in protecting hummingbirds.

Visit the Audubon Adventures website (www.audubonadventures.org/Hummingbirds.htm) to download a **FREE** full color classroom guide all about hummingbirds, just for kids! There are also lots more fun, interactive features on Audubon Adventures online!



Then, sign up for Audubon's newest citizen science program, Hummingbirds at Home (hummingbirdsathome.org). You can help protect hummingbirds by capturing crucial data with just a few clicks. It's easy and fun to do – the mobile-friendly web portal and smart phones app is a fun and easy way for everyone to get involved.



The Meadowlark Messenger

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Calendar of Events May 2015



Thursday	May 7, 7 PM. Monthly meeting at Urbana Free Library. Recipients of the 2014 Kendeigh grants will present their research findings. Amber Weingart: "Conserving a Charismatic Grassland Species in Illinois: The Barn Owl" and Bryan Reiley: "Benefits of Restored Habitats for Declining Shrubland Birds"
Sundays	May 3 – May 31, 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 9, all day. Spring Bird Count, the 40th annual statewide bird census. Contact Beth Chato.
Saturday	May 9, Busey Woods at 9-11am and Weaver Park at 1-3pm. Join Urbana Park District for Stewardship Saturdays.
Saturday	May 16, 11am-4pm. Seventh Annual Bird Migration Festival at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.
Sun-Sun	May 10– May 17. Birdathon. Champaign County Audubon's annual fundraiser for our Kendeigh Fund Scholarships for bird studies in Illinois
Thursday	May 21, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting at Anita Purves Nature Center