



The Meadowlark Messenger

March 2012 • Volume 29, No. 2

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)

We have had occasion in the last couple of weeks to reflect on the advances in technology that are influencing birding. When John James Audubon set out to document bird species in North America in the early 1800s, the tools of ornithology included drawing materials and a shotgun. Scientists and naturalists of the day required that the bird be "in the hand" to ensure accurate identification. Many birds were sacrificed and the skins preserved to document the variation among and between species.

By the time Roger Tory Peterson appeared on the scene in the early 20th century, the conservation movement was in full swing, and the emphasis on the collection of bird species was declining. Professional and amateur ornithology buffs still used drawing extensively, but photography was becoming the standard for documenting and identifying known and unknown bird species. The use of binoculars and telescopes, originally developed in Galileo's day, for viewing birds became more widely used starting in the late 1800s. As technology improved and manufacturing of high quality lenses became possible many more people were able to purchase reasonably priced optics to enjoy the growing bird watching craze.

Peterson is credited with making bird identification accessible through an ingenious system of pointing out field marks on bird drawings. The modern field guide was born and has proliferated to include all manner of living and non-living phenomena.

Combined with binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras, field guides have created unprecedented access to information about birds and their natural habitat.

Present technology is truly astounding. Darin just recently downloaded a field guide application onto his smart phone that includes drawings, descriptions, identifying characteristics, ecology and habitat, four-to-six photographs of each North American species in various plumage, range maps, audio recording of songs and calls, and a note taking feature! Similar applications allow you to record through a global positioning system the location of bird sightings. When combined with a good pair of binoculars, these are powerful tools for bird identification.

We are wondering what is next; binoculars with built in computers that have species identification software. There is already an application for identifying tree species using the camera on a smart phone. Or perhaps voice recognition software will become widely available for identifying species by ear. There are many advances that could allow people with sensory disabilities to more fully participate in birding. We might also wonder if there are any downsides to such improvements in technology for bird identification. Will the challenge of identification be lessened and therefore attract fewer enthusiasts? Does the playing of birdsong recordings to attract birds disturb birds in their natural habitats?

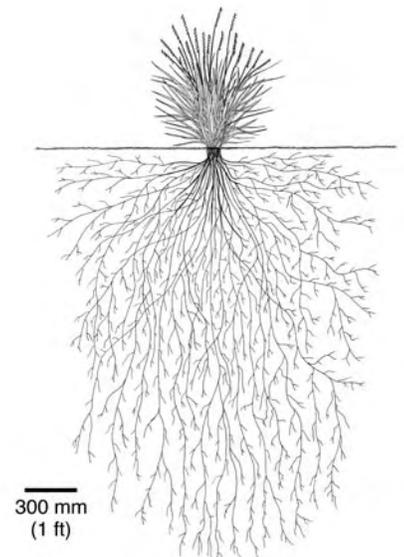
We are optimistic that improvements in technology will offer advantages that will make birding accessible to a wider audience and that by engaging with birds and their

environment more people will become aware of the importance of conservation and wildlife protection. With or without technology, we think that getting out to view birds will always be an enjoyable pastime.

MARCH MEETING
at the Urbana Free Library
Auditorium
Thursday, March 1 at 7 PM
*A Special Showing from New
Light Media*

America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie

This 60-minute documentary tells the rich and complex story of one of the most astonishing alterations of nature in human history. The extraordinary cinematography of prairie remnants, original score and archival images are all delicately interwoven to create a powerful and moving viewing experience about the natural and cultural history of America.



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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

Highlights for this month are mostly raptors. Once again a Snowy Owl was the star. This one chose a rooftop south of Champaign for his night perch, to the delight of many viewers. Bald Eagles were seen at Riverbend and Homer Lake. A Prairie Falcon hunted south of Sidney, as did a Merlin. Red-winged blackbirds, grackles, meadowlark and killdeer have been seen. Spring on the way?

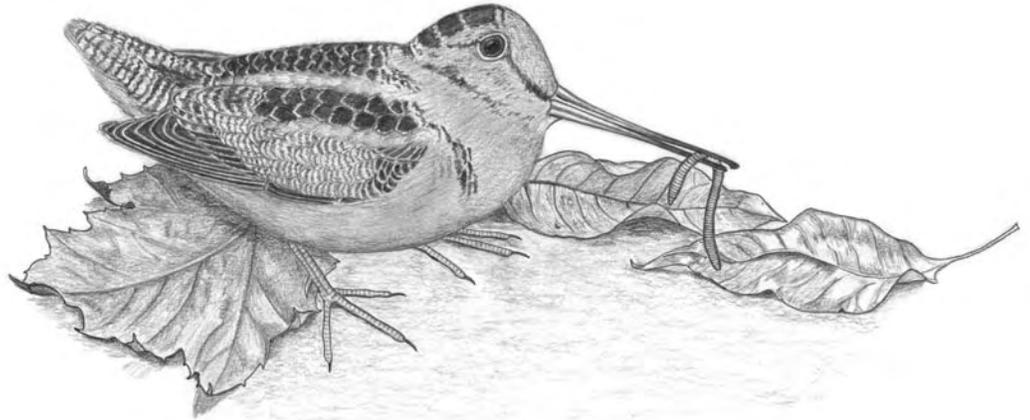
March Field Trip

March 17, 8 AM. – Emiquon Wildlife Refuge on the Illinois River. Meet at the Nature Center parking lot. Emiquon is popular with migrating waterfowl. We'll return after lunch.

Woodcock Walk at Meadowbrook Park

Wednesday, March 14, 7-8pm

Meet at the Race Street parking lot Meadowbrook Park, Urbana,



Sunday Morning Bird Walks

March 4 - 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

Several bills have been introduced into Congress dealing with environmental matters. The problem with these is that I do not know the status of any of them--they may be making progress or they may be languishing in limbo. Here are the ones I know about, for what it's worth.

XL Pipeline redux? President Obama did not approve the proposed XL pipeline to carry dirty, hazardous shale oil from Canada to the Texas coast. Some Congress men want to legislatively force permission for this potential disaster.

The "Restore" Act: Money from fines paid by British Petroleum (BP) from the big oil spill in the Gulf would be used to help restore the gulf coast ecosystems.

"Drill and Drive" -- yet another attempt to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, HR 7, attaches opening the Refuge as an attachment to the vital Transportation Bill.

And in the ILLINOIS legislature, Senator Freirichs and Representative Jakobsson have introduced bills (SB3280 & HB3897) that would require companies involved with hydraulic fracturing to disclose the chemicals used. While no 'fracking' has yet been done in Illinois, there is potential in many shale areas.

Not a bill--just a situation: When wolves were removed from the endangered species list, control over wolf "management" reverted to the states. Some western states have a politically powerful contingent who feel that the only good wolf is a dead wolf--hunting is resuming. Maybe they are trying to kill enough to return them to "endangered" status????

OK, I have to put in SOMETHING optimistic: From the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) --Snow leopards have been captured on camera in Bhutan. To see videos of these magnificent animals, visit the WWF website:
ecomments@wwfus.org

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Robins and the End of Winter



“Not long after the bluebird comes the robin. In large numbers they scour the fields and groves. You hear their piping in the meadow, in the pasture, on the hillside. Walk in the woods, and the dry leaves rustle with the whirl of their wings, the air is vocal with their cheery call. In excess of joy and vivacity, they run, leap, scream, chase each other through the air, diving and sweeping among the trees with perilous rapidity.

When the day is sunny and the ground is bare, you meet him at all points and hear him at all hours. At sunset, on the tops of the tall maples, with look heavenward, and in a spirit of utter abandonment, he carols his simple strain. And sitting thus amid the stark, silent trees, above the wet, cold earth, with the chill of winter still in the air, there is no fitter or sweeter songster in the whole round year. It is in keeping with the scene and the occasion. How round and genuine the notes are, and how eagerly our ears drink them in! The first utterance, and the spell of winter is thoroughly broken, and the remembrance of it afar off. “

KENDEIGH GRANTS for 2012
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Champaign County Audubon Society annually offers grants for research in ornithology in Illinois for a maximum of \$1000. We invite submissions for this year's grants. These must contain

1. A description of the research to be carried out.
2. A proposed budget.
3. Evidence of your qualifications to do the research, including a brief C.V. and at least 2 references.
4. The applicant's name, mailing address, local phone number, and e-mail address.
5. After the completion of the research, the grantee must present the results in writing to CCAS. He/she may also be asked to give a program.

Four copies should be submitted to
Helen Parker, Conservation Chair, CCAS
103 W. Delaware
Urbana, IL 61801

or to Champaign County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 882
Urbana, IL 61803

and should indicate: Attention Kendeigh grant committee.

Applications must be received before March 20, 2012. Notification of awards will be made in early April.

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:**

March 10th: 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

March 24th: 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, or Darin Eastburn at <mailto:eastburn@illinois.edu>eastburn@illinois.edu. Thank you.

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: _____ C2ZG500Z

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ 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

Wildlife Conservation Society's Online Teacher Academy

The Wildlife Conservation Society's Online Teacher Academy allows audiences of busy educators across the nation to pursue their professional development virtually. Brighten your spring with a course that will bring nature into your classroom! Spring 2012 courses run from April 6 to May 27, 2012, and include:

Habitat Ecology for Educators—Explore habitats and wildlife from around the world and examine the interconnectedness of everything on Earth. Available at a special reduced price of only \$50 (a \$225 savings)!

Conservation Biology for Educators—Discover what it takes to save the world's most incredible, and endangered, animals. Learn how scientists study animals in nature and use that information to protect wildlife and wild places.

Courses run entirely online for six weeks. Each participant will receive free resources. Graduate credits are available for a reasonable additional fee (see "Registration Details" on www.wcs.org/elearning for more information). Enroll today by visiting www.wcs.org/elearning or calling 1-718-220-5136.

Journey North Citizen Scientist Network

Join the Journey North citizen scientist network. It's free! <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>

Journey North engages students in a global study of wildlife migration and seasonal change. K-12 students share their own field observations with classmates across North America. They track the coming of spring through the migration patterns of monarch butterflies, robins, hummingbirds, whooping cranes, gray whales, bald eagles—and other birds and mammals; the budding of plants; changing sunlight; and other natural events. Find migration maps, pictures, standards-based lesson plans, activities and information to help students make local observations and fit them into a global context. Widely considered a best-practices model for education, Journey North is the nation's premiere "citizen science" project for children. The general public is welcome to participate.

FREE Green Teacher Webinar

"Schoolyards Re-Imagined: School Ground Innovation in the San Francisco Bay Area and Beyond"

Tuesday, March 27, 2012, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Presenter: Sharon Danks

Schools around the world are using their grounds to enhance hands-on teaching and learning, enrich outdoor play, and improve the ecology of their neighborhoods. Sharon Danks will present a vibrant slideshow that takes us on a journey to explore the growing movement toward "green" school grounds. Along the way, we will "visit" some of the world's most innovative green schoolyards including schools with: edible gardens and outdoor cooking facilities; wildlife habitats with ponds or forest ecosystems; schoolyard watershed models, rainwater catchment systems, and much more.

For more information or to register visit <http://www.greenteacher.com/webinars.html>.



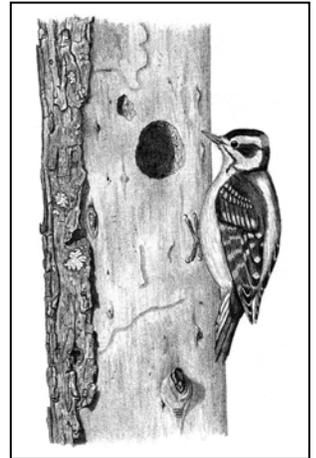
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Calendar of Events, March 2012

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- Sundays March 4 - 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.
- Wednesday March 14, 7-8 PM. Woodcock Walk at Meadowbrook Park.**
- Thursday March 15, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Saturday March 17, 9 AM – 4 PM. Emiquon Wildlife Refuge** on the Illinois River. Meet at the Nature Center parking lot.
- Tuesday March 20.** Deadline for receipt of Kendeigh grant applications. **First day of spring, 12:14 AM.**

