



The Meadowlark Messenger

February 2013 • Volume 30, No. 1

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

President's Column

It's a new year and Champaign County Audubon Society is celebrating its 73rd year as an organization and 68 years as an affiliate of the National Audubon Society. And here we are, the members who keep this organization running strong. There are nearly 30 people who volunteer their time to serve on committees and attend monthly board meetings. Don't forget those who participate and help out with bird walks, annual bird counts, presentations, and other society events. And last but not least, we have hundreds of members who support the society. If you are reading this, you are either one of those members already, or you may be considering becoming a member.

None-the-less, this new year brings new co-presidents. We would be amiss to not introduce ourselves to all of you. Our names are Brian and Susan Stearns. We are newer members of CCAS. However, those of you who attend the first Thursday of the month events or board meetings will find our faces quite familiar. Brian served a two-year term as a member-at-large and Susan served for one year as vice president. With such little experience with CCAS, we have a lot to learn in our new role. We are learning quickly that there is much more to being president of this organization than just the preparation and leading of board meetings. So here we are, counting on those of you with years of experience to gently guide and

support us in our new role.

We both have an appreciation for native wildlife and habitat. Susan, born and raised in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, and Brian, born and raised in southern Illinois, both grew up with woods in their backyards. As children, we both spent many hours walking trails, looking up at the trees, turning over rocks, and playing in creeks and lakes. Fortunately, these were not just childhood activities, but activities that we enjoy together as husband and wife.

Brian has a strong interest in wildlife and wildlife photography. While he considers himself an amateur, he is very talented and respected for his work. After all, he has the determination and patience to get up before daybreak and sit for hours waiting for birds to decide he's not a threat and become his buddy for the day. He has given presentations of his work to CCAS, the Middlefork Audubon Society, and the Rantoul Garden Club. Many of his photographs can be seen online at

www.brianstearnsphotography.com.

This website is predominantly a photo journal of his wildlife explorations in central Illinois. Some of his work can also be found in the photo gallery on the Champaign County Forest Preserve District's website at www.ccfpd.org.

Susan, on the other hand, is the tag along spotter who is great at pointing and asking, "What's that?." Since marrying Brian in 2001, she has

learned to tell the difference between a Bluebird and a Blue Jay. She's also learned to recognize quite a few other birds, especially Brian's favorite waterfowl. Her favorite birds are the mated pair of Sandhill Cranes that reside at Vermilion County's Heron Park. She has shared her love for these two birds by writing articles about them for the Middlefork Audubon Society website and creating a photo journal telling the story of their first colt. *We wish all of you the best in 2013.*

Susan & Brian Stearns
Co-Presidents of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)

FEBRUARY MEETING

Urbana Free Library Auditorium
Thursday, February 7, 7 PM



BIRD LANGUAGE BASICS

In this **one-hour DVD**, expert tracker **Jon Young** distills 35 years of field experience with wildlife behavior. He covers the five voices of birds, the 12 shapes of alarm, and more, demonstrating how these can be dynamic indicators of predator-prey relationships.

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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

Winter hawks spotted include Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and Rough-legged. Short-eared Owls were also seen. Homer Lake had a family of Trumpeter Swans. Several large flocks of Lapland Longspurs and a few Snow Buntings were seen. Redpolls and Red Crossbills are still around. The South First Street pond had Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks. A Bald Eagle flew over the university Pollinitorium.

BIRD COUNTS

Christmas Bird Count from Helen Parker

The Champaign County Christmas Bird Count was held Saturday, December 15, 2012. Eighteen people in seven parties identified 65 species of birds; one additional species was seen during "count week". (Count week is three days before and 3 days after the count itself.) The highlights of the count were probably the prairie falcon seen by Greg Lambeth & Steve Bailey, and the horned grebe seen by Beth Chato, Dorothy Neumann, & Helen Parker. Also notable on this count: Sue Smith spent seven hours kayaking the Salt Fork--that takes more fortitude than I have! The actual results have been posted on bird notes.

Annual Eagle Count from Helen Parker

We (3 people) did our section of the annual eagle count January 5. (This is Havana to Beardstown & back on the Illinois river.) We did not get in to all the areas we sometimes do because slippery roads made driving into some of the back water areas unsafe, but we saw 18 adult & 10 immature bald eagles for a total of 28. The most surprising thing on this trip was a flock of at least 100 tundra swans in a cornfield on our way in to Sanganois. One does not often see tundra swans in central Illinois at all--to see a large flock was astounding!

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

The count takes place February 15 through February 18. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC anywhere you wish, your yard, a local park or preserve. Report your results on the GBBC website. We would like to have a good total of species for our area, so please take part. For more details go to birdcount.org.

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

Inventory was just completed. Thanks to those who helped!
Get ready for spring with new binoculars, or perhaps a book, CD or DVD to study bird songs and sights. Still time for winter feeders or a bird bath heater.



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

It's a new year, and for a change, I'm reporting mostly good news for this column. First: There was a \$1.4 billion dollar settlement from the 2010 Gulf oil spill, earmarked for restoration of the damage done. The first of this money is about to be released, and restoration will soon begin. Also, in the "we're fixing things" category: Audubon Florida reports that a critical restoration project that will preserve freshwater levels near the Everglades has been completed. This will help maintain this incredible ecosystem.

Everybody has heard far more than they wished about the "fiscal cliff" negotiations in Congress. It turns out that this was not entirely devoted to the taxes we all heard about. Included were provisions providing assorted tax credits for "green energy" projects--something needed to reduce our addiction to fossil fuels!

Congress has still not been able to get its act together on a new farm bill. They passed a 9-month extension of the current one, which means that we won't be paying \$7 + for a gallon of milk or something equally bad for a loaf of bread in the immediate future. With a 9-month gestation period, perhaps they will be able to come up with a new bill.

Of course, not all the news is good: Shell Oil, which wishes to drill in sensitive Arctic waters, started the new year with a BANG! Literally. Their drill rig ran aground. This should raise serious doubts about their competence to drill in sensitive areas without doing damage. Regulators, take note.

Lest we think that we know all about this planet and the creatures we share it with: The World Wildlife Fund has reported that 126 new species have been discovered in the Greater Mekong area of southeast Asia. This covers part of several countries; one can only hope that these creatures will not go extinct due to habitat destruction before they can be studied!

SNOWBIRDS and WINTER STONEFLIES

The most omnipresent and abundant of all our winter visitors from the north are the juncos, or snowbirds. Slate coloured above and white below, perfectly describes these birds, although their distinguishing mark, visible a long way off, is the white V in their tails, formed by several white outer feathers on each side. The sharp chirps of juncos are heard before the ice begins to form, and they stay with us all winter.

- *The Log of the Sun* by William Beebe

Slate-colored snowbirds flit before me in the path, feeding on the seeds on the snow, the countless little brown seeds that begin to be scattered over the snow, so much more obvious to bird and beast. A hundred kinds of indigenous grain are harvested now, broadcast upon the surface of the snow. Thus at a critical season these seeds are shaken down on to a clean white napkin, unmixed with dirt and rubbish, and off this the little pensioners pick them. Their clean table is thus spread a few inches or feet above the ground.

- Henry David Thoreau



Take A Child Outside Week

Champaign County Audubon Society Supports Community Forum – Will You Help Too?

CCAS is excited to support the upcoming Take a Child Outside Week, being planned for Sept 24-30, 2013 by the Forest Preserve District, the Champaign and Urbana park districts, and the Office of Recreation & Park Resources, and Landscape and Human Health Lab at Univ. of IL.

The week is slated to include a screening of the documentary *Mother Nature's Child*, followed by several days of outdoor programs and workshops at area parks, and culminating with a community forum during which child and nature experts will share their research and insights on the topic. Planned to headline the forum will be critically acclaimed author Richard Louv, famous for his landmark book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

We Need Your Help!

CCAS has been approved for grant funds from the National Audubon Society, and will match those funds from our budget to support this effort. The planning committee still needs to raise \$8700 to make Take a Child Outside Week a success. Please consider supporting this project through your tax-deductible donation. Individual donations can be made out to CCAS and sent to P.O. Box 882, Urbana, Illinois, 61803-0882; please note "Take a Child Outside" on your check. Businesses interested in being a sponsor should contact Mary Ellen Wuellner at hq@ccfpd.org. Thank you!

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:

February 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.
February 23	Meadowbrook	9 -11 am.	Meet at Race Street parking lot.
	Perkins Road	1 -3 pm.	Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) at Anita Purves Nature Center Saturday February 16 9AM – 4 PM

Sponsored by National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this is a nationwide count. Locally, Audubon people will be at ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER to count our birds. Please join us. Help Champaign County Audubon Society record the number of birds at feeding stations and along trails in Busey Woods. Weather permitting, we will take a short hike through Busey Woods/Crystal Lake Park at 3 PM to count those birds. You are also encouraged to count on your own, any place, and on as many days as you like, sending in a separate checklist for each day.



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: _____

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

sclementz@ccfpd.org

Green Teacher Webinars

Green Teacher is a non-profit organization that provides resources to help educators – both inside and outside the classroom – promote global and environmental awareness among young people from elementary through high school. Green Teacher's webinar series gives formal and non-formal educators the opportunity to hear presentations from leaders in the environmental education field. The presentations cover topics ranging from sustainability to best practices for implementing programs and provide a forum for questions and discussion.

Upcoming Webinars:

Using Insects to Motivate Students

Thursday, February 7, 2013, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

Presenter: John Guyton

FREE

Children like bugs, so it is unfortunate and inaccurate when they learn that insects are harmful. In this webinar, John Guyton will describe the techniques and materials used in a 4-day Bug Camp to build and sustain student interest in entomology or science. He will briefly discuss collecting, pinning, classifying and showing off collections.

Techniques covered will include micro-lessons or entomological moments, managing the hidden curriculum or using free time for instructional goals and peer teaching. Finally, he will cover the requisite skills, knowledge base and teaching resources. For more information or to register visit <http://greenteacher.com/webinars.html>.

Community Treasure Hunts

Monday, February 18, 2013,

7:30 - 8:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

Presenter: Steven Glazer

FREE

Quests are community treasure hunts that teach students how to see and value local treasures. The quest might focus on natural features (a watershed), cultural sites (an early cemetery), or perhaps the setting of a specific story (the beginnings of an industry). They can be designed and adapted to explore a wide variety of environments; and quest-making integrates language arts, social studies, science, math and technology in a multi-sensory, experiential way. Quests incorporate core subjects into a wonderful experiential learning opportunity that students will remember throughout their lives. For more information or to register visit <http://greenteacher.com/webinars.html>.



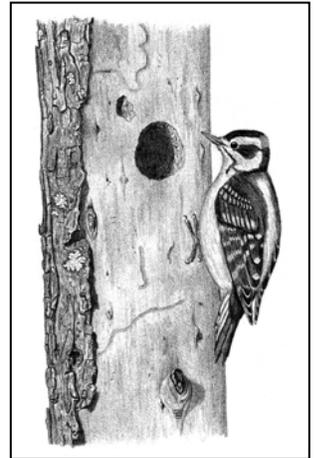
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Calendar of Events, February 2013

- Thursday February 7, 7 PM. General meeting** at Urbana Free Library Auditorium. **“Bird Language Basics”**. In this one-hour DVD, expert tracker Jon Young distills 35 years of field experience with wildlife behavior.
- Saturday February 16, 9 AM – 4 PM. Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** at Anita Purves Nature Center. The actual count takes place February 15 through February 18. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC anywhere you wish, your yard, a local park or preserve. Report your results on the GBBC website.
- Thursday February 21, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.



Coming in March - Sunday Morning Bird Walks at Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park begin March 3.