



The Meadowlark Messenger

February 2014 ♦ Volume 31, No. 1

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

Presidents' Column Susan Stearns

Co-President of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)

I don't know about you but I think we've had a lot of weather that only a polar bear could enjoy. I'm just glad I don't live at the North Pole with an average winter temperature of -40°F and a high of 32°F in the summer. That is too cold for me!

With this arctic weather we've been having, like us, many have stayed cooped up in their homes more than usual. But what are you doing to prevent cabin fever this season?

One of the things that has helped us is setting up bird feeders and keeping them full. We moved in August and our yard is a blank slate so we're putting our plans for adding feeders into action.

Every yard has its own unique challenge. We want to draw in some of the smaller birds without the bulk of the seed going to a ginormous flock of starlings hanging out on our chimney to keep warm. Fortunately for us, we found the perfect bird feeder in the Audubon Nature Store at Anita Purves. The feeder will close when too much weight is on the perch. It sure did help us out to see the feeder in action from the bird viewing room at Anita Purves.

Wanting to check on the birds gives us reason to get off our bums

and stand by the window. Just taking in the light through the window helps with the winter blues. And for those of us with anxiety-filled lifestyles, it's so relaxing to watch these amazing little creatures.

If you need another excuse to stand at a window or go out for a walk, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is February 14 – 17. On Saturday, February 15th, some of our board members will be at Anita Purves leading bird walks through Busey Woods and staying warm in the viewing room while counting the birds. Take a step to beat the winter blues by coming out and joining us. Meanwhile, you'll be helping researchers learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. You can learn more about the GBBC online at <http://birds.audubon.org/great-backyard-bird-count>, including how to participate from home.

If you need another reason to brave the weather, be sure to join us Thursday, February 6th at 7:00pm for our monthly program at the Urbana Free Library Auditorium. Joe Lill, a past-president of the Chicago Audubon Society, will present "Roger Tory Peterson: No Person Left Inside," the story behind Peterson's 1934 book, *A Field Guide to the Birds*.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Urbana Free Library

Thursday,

February 6, 7 PM

*"Roger Tory Peterson:
No Person Left Inside"*

*The story behind the
publication of Peterson's 1934
book.*

presented by *Joe Lill*

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS

Giving Field Marks of all Species
Found East of the Rockies

BY
ROGER TORY PETERSON
of the National Audubon Society



Joe Lill is a former Board Member (and past President) of the Chicago Audubon Society. His interest in birding was fostered by a 1984 trip to the Mississippi Palisades with his wife, Cheryl Kreiman. He is also Associate Professor of Music at North Park University in Chicago, where he directs the Jazz Ensemble, conducts the Concert Band and teaches trumpet.

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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

Most exciting was the Snowy Owl hanging out along the Champaign County/Douglas County line. Still there as of Jan 11, but no one has seen him on the Champaign County side. Moraine View State Park also had one on December 5. A variety of exciting hawks have also been seen, Rough-legged, Red-shouldered, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and best of all, a Golden Eagle on the Forest Glen Christmas Count. Vermilion County had a Swainson's Hawk. That and a possible Snow/Ross's Goose hybrid challenged local bird experts. Short-eared Owls were seen at the Monticello Road Field Station. A Sandhill Crane flew over Busey Woods on December 14 in time for our Christmas Bird Count. Very few winter finches have been spotted this year.



WINTER BIRD COUNTS (CBCs)

The Champaign County Christmas Bird Count was held December 14, the earliest date possible. The weather was not favorable; the snow was deep. However, 12 intrepid birders found 65 species, which is about average these days. In addition to spotting the resident Peregrine, the team of Lambeth, Bailey *et al.* located a Merlin and a very cold Pipit. I will try to send the complete list to Pam for the website. (I am so far behind on things it's pathetic, and I have nobody to blame but myself.)

The annual eagle count on January 4 yielded surprisingly few birds: 9 adult & 5 immature Eagles for a total of 14 birds. There were probably more around but they stayed out of sight. Backwater lakes were frozen solid and the wind was fierce--we made no attempt to go into Sanganois or across the cross-dike at Anderson Lake, so we probably missed some at these locations.

**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

We are working on shop inventory. Thanks to helpers Charlene Anchor, Jim Hoyt, and Helen Parker. The final report is not ready, but sales were down a bit from last year. Do keep the shop in mind for birding and bird feeding equipment, natural history and children's books, puppets, and inexpensive small toys. Come shop and save with your 10% member discount.

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

New Year, Old Problems

It's January, the month named for the Roman god Janus, who had two faces--one looking back in the past, the other looking forward to the future. Both are necessary, since the future is partly determined by the past--what we must do is try to avoid having past mistakes repeat while charting a forward course.

No matter how hard some people try to deny it, the climate is changing; the effect we are seeing currently is more violent fluctuations in the weather. (Note: climate is what you expect, weather is what you get.) There will probably come a time when things settle down; but for now, storms and temperature extremes will dominate the weather reports. This does not mean we should not make every effort to limit carbon emissions to the atmosphere--we should and must. But some change is inevitable. If we can forestall potential environmental disasters like the Keystone XL pipeline and the release of organic pollutants to the water table from sources such as fracking and toxic compounds in a landfill over our water supply, some consequences may be mitigated. I'm sure I'll talk more about these things in future columns. Meanwhile, insulate your home, use energy-efficient lights and appliances, and don't buy more than you will use. ("Waste not, want not" is still wise advice.)

The cranes finally made it! The whooping cranes being led from Wisconsin to Florida had many delays this year--but they finally got to their destination at the beginning of January, which is about 2 months later than they should have been. Let us hope they fatten up and gain enough energy for their flight north in the spring.

FEBRUARY and TREE SPARROWS

The word "tree" is misleading as applied to the Tree Sparrow; for the bird is most frequently found on the ground, and does not even nest in trees ordinarily. This is one of very many instances of strange inaccuracy in popular nomenclature. The vernacular names "Arctic Chipper" and "Winter Chip-bird" are, however, justified by the facts that the bird breeds in the northland, and passes the winter months in the temperate zone. Indeed the Tree Sparrow and Slate-colored Junco are the only native members of the Sparrow family which may be counted winter residents within the United States. The Tree Sparrow has the further distinction of being one of the few American birds who sing real songs in real winter weather, for its pleasing little Canary-like ditty of tinkling note is often heard in February when there is both snow and blow aplenty.

One-fourth ounce of weed seed per day is a conservative estimate of the food of an adult Tree Sparrow. On this basis, in a large agricultural state like Iowa, Tree Sparrows annually eat approximately 875 tons of weed seeds. Only the farmer, upon whose shoulders falls the heavy burden of freeing his land of noxious weeds, can realize what this vast consumption of weed seeds means in the saving and cost of labor. Dr. Judd reports an interesting illustration of the Tree Sparrow's habits which was noticed during a heavy snowstorm in the third week of February. Here and there, where the whiteness of the field was pierced by phalanxes of dry broom-sedge, a flock of a dozen or more Tree Sparrows found good cheer in spite of driving flakes. From one brown patch to another they flew, clinging to the plants while they plucked out the seeds, seldom leaving a stalk unexplored.

Frequently two would feed from a single stalk, while a third, made thrifty by the winter dearth, hopped in the snow below searching for scattered seed.

The snow whirled in clouds across the field, but these little creatures worked on with cheerful, hardy industry.

- *T. Gilbert Pearson (1917), Founder of the National Audubon Society*



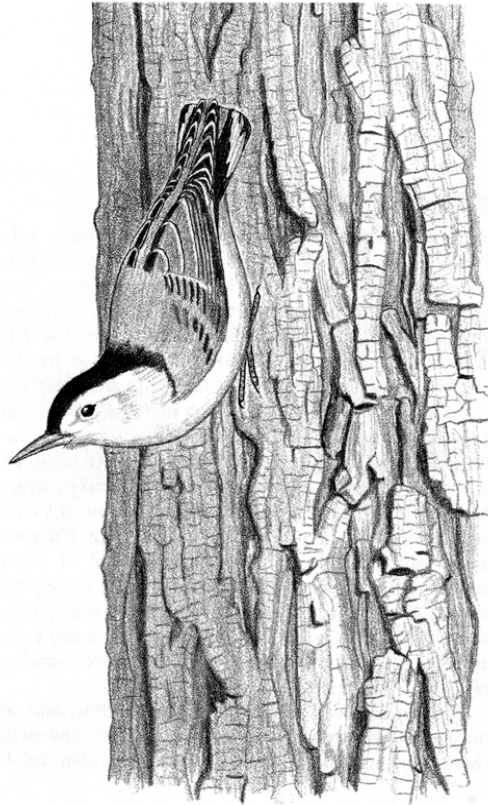
Friends of Champaign County Audubon, a reminder: All local Friends membership fees were due as of January 1. Your contribution of \$15 supports the local Chapter. Please renew or consider signing up on page 5 of this newsletter or send dues and membership information to our membership chair, Caitlin Lill, 607 West Vine Street, Champaign, IL 61820.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT (GBBC)
at Anita Purves Nature Center
Saturday February 15 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 two short (about 45 minutes) hikes through Busey Woods/Crystal Lake Park to count these birds:

10 AM
3 PM

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.



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 8 | 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 22 | Meadowbrook | 9-11 am. | Meet at Race Street parking lot. |
| | Perkins Road | 1 -3 pm. | Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road. |

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 \$35.00..... new renewal
(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: _____ 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

Champaign County Audubon Society Bird Adaptation Loan Box

Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve

Birds have different types of beaks, eggs, and feet to adapt to their unique lifestyles. Our Champaign County Audubon Society loan kit includes replicas of bird skulls, eggs, and tracks, as well as hands-on activities. This loan box is appropriate for 6 year olds and up. \$25 refundable deposit required. For more information or to reserve these loan materials please contact Stacey Clementz at sclementz@ccfpd.org or 217-896-2455.



Bylaws Revisions

Dear members, the Bylaws Committee has been working hard for the past 6 months to draft updates to the CCAS Bylaws (last updated in 2002).

A copy of the revised bylaws can be downloaded from the website at:

<http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org>. Please contact Pam Leiter (896-2455 or <mailto:leiterp@msn.com>) if you need a printed copy. In the document, you will see that changes are highlighted in yellow; underlined words are those proposed for addition, with deletes noted with strikethrough.

In sum, this round of revisions includes: grammatical edits, typo corrections, updates so that the Bylaws reflect what we currently do, updates to membership to align with changes at the National Society level, and further formalizes important procedures.

CCAS Members will have the opportunity to vote on these changes at the March program (March 6).

The committee plans to continue their work through the next year or so. After much discussion, we decided to recommend revisions in logical 'chunks' and bring those to the Board and membership as discussions progress. Thus this first round includes the basic changes mentioned above.

Many thanks to the Bylaws Committee for all their hard work on this project thus far!



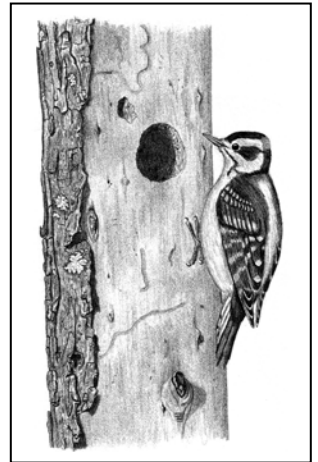
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Calendar of Events, February 2014

- Thursday February 6, 7 PM. Monthly meeting at Urbana Free Library.** Joe Lill of Chicago Audubon Society will present "Roger Tory Peterson: No Person Left Inside," the story behind Peterson's 1934 book, *A Field Guide to the Birds*.
- Fri.- Mon. February 14-17. The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC),** a nationwide project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.
- Saturday February 15, 9 AM - 4 PM. The Great Backyard Bird Count at Anita Purves Nature Center** Champaign County Audubon Society will record the number of birds at feeding stations and along trails in Busey Woods. Weather permitting, we will take two short (about 45 minutes) hikes through Busey Woods/Crystal Lake Park to count birds:
- Thursday February 20. 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.

