



The Meadowlark Messenger

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

Engaging with Nature

Caroline Mallory & Darin Eastburn
Co-Presidents of Champaign County
Audubon Society (CCAS)

Growing up in northern California it was easy to be in nature. While I did not always appreciate the quality of the environment, living in the shadow of Mount Lassen and at the foot of the Cascade Mountains, meant that I was surrounded by natural beauty. On still winter days in the northern Sacramento Valley, I could see Mount Lassen and Mount Shasta, part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, in the near distance, their snow-covered slopes beckoning skiers and mountaineers.

The rugged Pacific coastline of northern California was equally beguiling, and I never tire of the view from those cliffs out to sea. Surrounded by the smells and sights of the ocean, I fell in love with nature and the sense of peace that comes from being connected to the Earth. As a young adult, backpacking in the Sierra Nevada and Siskiyou mountains, I began to develop a greater sensitivity to the integral nature of humans and earth. As I enter midlife, I realize how important those early experiences were for shaping my values and attitudes toward the natural world and the place of the human species in it. As the Champaign County Audubon Society considers our contributions to the future of the Earth, we must understand that children and youth are the key to ensuring the future harmonious interaction between humans and our environment.

Recently, board members of the CCAS volunteered at Migration Fest at the Champaign County Forest Preserve

District, Homer Lake. The event attracted families with children and focused on the spring migration of birds. Darin and I helped by staffing a bird kite-making activity – and the kites really fly! There were a variety of crafts and demonstration areas as well as storytelling and music. Children of all ages attended with their families and learned about birds and their environments. I applaud the parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and guardians for their efforts to ensure their children engage with nature from a young age.

Children who grow up appreciating nature will be more likely to value a healthy and vigorous Earth. As adults, perhaps they will support policies and actions to improve habitats. Certainly, the main responsibility for instilling values and beliefs about the importance of a healthy Earth lies with the family. However, organizations like the Audubon Society have made a commitment to developing social structures that support families and communities in developing these values. We are committed to educating our community about the importance and complexity of the Earth and its diverse habitats.

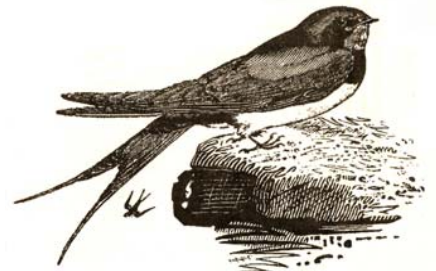
I hope you will think about how you can support the engagement of children and youth with nature. Perhaps you could volunteer at your local school, parks, library, or civic organization to sponsor nature and environmental awareness programs for children. Maybe you would prefer to mentor a child who would benefit from exposure to nature. Alternatively, you might enjoy political action in support of initiatives that benefit the the environment and children's future. Whatever your choices

are, bravo for your support of future generations!

**JUNE POTLUCK
&
SWALLOW WATCHING**
Thursday June 16
at
**Homer Lake
Walnut Hill Shelter**
(next to dam)

**Please bring your own table
service, your own beverage
and a dish to share.**

**Watching begins at 6
Potluck at 6:30**



**"The Swallow "
Wood engraving
by Thomas Bewick
from**

A History of British Birds (1797)

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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 unusual birds this month were a White-faced Ibis on the South Farms and a one-day Ibis visitor at Lake of the Woods. A Mississippi Kite was reported from Catlin. A late Sandhill Crane flew over Meadowbrook Park. A Black-crowned Night Heron was also at Meadowbrook. Thirty-five different warbler species have been seen in Busey/Crystal Lake Park this spring. Summer Tanagers have been at suet feeders in two different local yards. Black-necked Stilts and other shorebirds hung out at the Curtis & Staley Road temporary wetlands.

SPRING BIRD COUNT

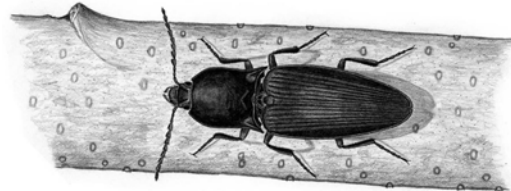
Saturday May 7 was the statewide spring bird Count. Champaign County had 36 observers, some of whom struggled with rain and even hail. However, the results were a total of 161 species, the highest count since 2004. Highest ever total was 167 in 1997. Needing official documentation this year were the White-faced Ibis, and a late lingering Fox Sparrow.

2011 BIRDATHON

Almost all the results are in for our annual scholarship fundraiser. The Town and Country Team, Jim Smith & Beth Chato, toured the county finding a total of 113 species. Ghost Busters Janet Jokela & Charlene Anchor toured local cemeteries for a total of 65 species, The Big Sitters, Beez Gordon & Beth Chato, went for quality over quantity, spending the morning at the Heron Park Observation Tower and including in their 39 species Sandhill Cranes, Mute Swans, and an Eagle. The Bike Patrol, Helen Parker & Jim Nardi, braved bad weather and had 19 species in Carle Park. The long-standing competition (10 years) between the Forest Preserve District and the Urbana Park District found both groups posting high totals. This year the Forest Preserve came out ahead with an amazing total of 149 species to the Park District's 122. Contributions are still most welcome. Send to Champaign County Audubon at PO Box 882, Urbana IL 61803.

FIELD TRIP

Saturday June 18, 8 – 10 AM. Encounters with insects at Meadowbrook Park. Join three members of the university's Entomology Department for encounters with the insect inhabitants of Meadowbrook Park. Meet at the Meadowbrook Park parking lot off Race Street at 8 AM.



AUDUBON COUNCIL of ILLINOIS (ACI) meets at Anita Purves Nature Center Saturday June 11

Champaign County Audubon (CCAS) is hosting the Audubon Council of Illinois (ACI) meeting on June 11. It will be held at the Anita Purves Nature Center; the meeting officially starts at 10 a.m., but people gather any time after 9 a.m. for refreshments and conversation. CCAS will supply coffee and hot water for tea; donations of cookies, rolls, etc. would be welcome.

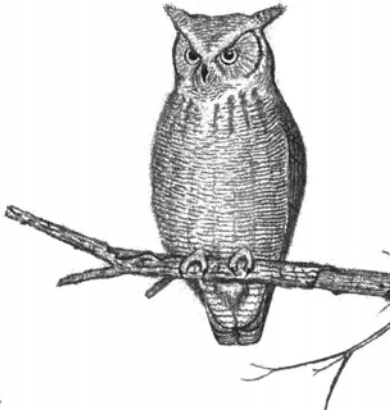
ACI is the umbrella organization for the National Audubon chapters in Illinois; representatives of the various chapters meet quarterly to discuss issues of interest to all and to learn what other chapters are doing. Members of CCAS are welcome to attend.



two haiku calls of owls

2/28/89

hear that great horned owl
hoot-hooting to his mate
who's hooting to you too!



5/4/11

barred owl all alone
barks like a dog in carle park
asks, "who cooks for you-u-u?"



ruth s walker

(with thanks to cathy rossow cunningham for teaching me the horned owl's call and to beth chato for the barred)

Whip-poor-wills and Summer Evenings



As the shadows deepen and the stars begin to come out, the whip-poor-will suddenly strikes up. What a rude intrusion upon the serenity and harmony of the hour! A cry without music, insistent, reiterated, loud, penetrating, and yet the ear welcomes it; the night and the solitude are so vast that they can stand it; and when, an hour later, as the night enters into full possession, the bird comes and serenades me under my window or upon my doorstep, my heart warms toward it. Its cry is a love-call, and there is something of the ardor and persistence of love in it, and when the female responds, and comes and hovers near, there is an interchange of subdued, caressing tones between the two birds that it is a delight to hear. During my first summer in my cabin one bird used to strike up every night from a high ledge of rocks in front of my door. At just such a moment in the twilight he would begin, the first to break the stillness. Then the others would follow, till the solitude was vocal with their calls. They are rarely heard later than ten o'clock. Then at daybreak they take up the tale again, whipping poor Will till one pities him. One April morning between three and four o'clock, hearing one strike up near my window, I began counting its calls. My neighbor had told me he had heard one call over two hundred times without a break, which seemed to me a big story. But I have a much bigger one to tell. This bird actually laid upon the back of poor Will one thousand and eighty-eight blows, with only a barely perceptible pause here and there, as if to catch its breath. Then it stopped about half a minute and began again, uttering this time three hundred and ninety calls, when it paused, flew a little farther away, took up the tale once more, and continued till I fell asleep.

- John Burroughs

A MOMENTOUS OCCASION FOR ILLINOIS' SANDHILL CRANES

Well nature lovers, it has finally happened. A pair of Sandhill Cranes has successfully hatched a colt in Vermilion County Illinois for the first time in over 100 years. It all started in the spring of 2010 when birders started seeing a single pair of Sandhill Cranes hanging out at Heron Park in Vermilion County. All of us thought that they would stay for a while and then head north, but they decided that they liked where they were and stayed. Shortly thereafter there were two confirmed nesting attempts made by the Cranes on the South side of Heron Park in the vicinity of the boardwalk. Given the unstable water levels during the Spring season in that area, both nests were flooded out, one nest had one confirmed egg in it. The two Cranes continued to hang out around the park and surprisingly became quite comfortable with people. In the fall the two Cranes headed South for the winter, leaving us to hope we would see them again the following Spring.

Our hopes were rewarded when on February 19th 2011 Bud Lewsader reported seeing two Sandhill Cranes at Heron Park. After some careful observation, and scrutinizing a few photos from the previous year, a few of us discovered some unique identifying features that confirmed that these were indeed the same Cranes from the year before. On the morning of March 19th I received a phone call from my wife Susan telling me that Bob Schifo called her to tell her to let me know that he, Ivan Petrov and Tom Marriage had found the Cranes' nest. When I got to the nest site, which was in an area of the park where the water level is much more stable, the four of us photographed the Cranes for a short while and then left. We were again amazed at how tolerant they were of people. At one point the Crane on the nest was actually napping while we were there, while the other foraged a few feet away completely ignoring us. Given where the nest was located, we decided to keep its location fairly quiet with a few of us checking in on them from time to time. On Monday March 21st one of our group, Dave Weible, saw and photographed two eggs in the nest. All we could do from that point was hope the Cranes had chosen a good spot to nest and that it wouldn't flood out.

On March 25th Bob reported that the water level had started rising due to storms the night before and that the Cranes were busily gathering reeds to build up the nest and keep it dry. Luckily the bulk of the rain held off until the latter half of April. On April 20th Dave Weible sent out a picture of a little reddish orange fuzz ball looking out over the edge of the Crane nest. One of the eggs had finally hatched. April 21st I went out bright and early to get a look at the little guy. I sat there for almost two hours before the parent that was keeping the colt warm decided it was warm enough to let the little guy out and let me have a look. Around 1:00 pm that afternoon while Dave Weible, his wife Diane, my wife Susan and I all watched, the Cranes coaxed their little colt off the nest. I've always wondered how a baby Crane could get from a nest surrounded by a couple feet of water to shore. Well, they float and swim just like a duckling. After the colt swam around for a bit peeping away all the while - the little guy was actually quite noisy - the parents led him to a nearby reed-covered island where he could feed and find good cover. About that time we realized that neither Crane had even looked back at the nest for almost 30 min. It was then we realized that the second egg must have been lost at some point.

I don't know when we will see the Cranes again as I imagine they will keep to good cover as the colt gains strength and grows. I'm hoping we will catch glimpses here and there, at least enough to let us know that the first Sandhill Crane born in Vermilion County in over 100 years is okay. – **Brian Stearns**



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



Membership for 2011

Friend of Champaign County Audubon Society \$15.00 _____

(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: _____

C1ZG500Z

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, 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

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

We can special order your needs. *Watching Warblers* is a great DVD for learning about these colorful birds. Wide selection of bird, and wildflower guides as well as nature books for children.



CONSERVATION CORNER Helen Parker, Conservation Chair

Old Man River just keeps on rollin', just keeps on rollin' along! The Mississippi carries a lot of water in a dry year--and this has been a very wet year. We've all seen the pictures of the river occupying all of its riverbed--we call it a "flood". People have been trying to tame this river for at least a century--but the river remains wild. Can we learn any lessons? Like, "Don't build in a flood plain"? Here in central Illinois along the Kaskaskia River and some of its tributaries there is a program called the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program that pays farmers to return flood-prone areas to nature. Trees and grasses can store floodwaters and release them gradually. This is, of course, a drop in the bucket--but if widely implemented could have a real effect.

One thing that seldom gets the attention it deserves is the Farm Bill. This year, Prairie Rivers Network, the Izaak Walton League, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance are sponsoring a Farm Bill Forum on June 2, in Springfield. It's free and open to the public. For more information, contact Prairie Rivers Network.

In all the budget talk in Congress, little or no public attention has been paid to the National Parks. These crown jewels must receive adequate funding if they are to survive. The National Parks and Conservation Association has developed a website which permits you to express support for the parks with the click of a mouse: www.npca.org.protecttheparks/

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a document called the "draft eagle conservation plan guidance", which is intended to provide guidelines for the wind industry to assist in actions to avoid and minimize adverse effects on eagles. (It anticipates writing similar guidance plans for other industries in the future.) National Audubon has written a very long, detailed set of comments on this plan; anybody interested in the whole thing can contact me. In brief, they emphasize the importance of sound science in developing plans and avoiding, rather than mitigating ill effects. They end with the hope that the resources needed will be available to implement the Guidance and achieve the dual goals of achieving stable or increasing eagle populations as well as growth of our nation's clean energy resources.



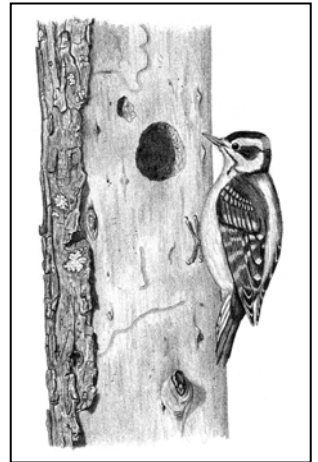
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Calendar of Events, June 2011

- Thursday June 16, 6 PM.** Annual potluck and swallow-watching at Homer Lake, Walnut Hill shelter.
- Saturday June 18, 8 – 10 AM.** Encounters with Insects at Meadowbrook Park. Meet at the Meadowbrook Park parking lot off Race Street at 8 AM.
- 4 PM to dusk.** Urbana Park District's annual Strawberry Jam Festival at Meadowbrook Park.
- Tuesday June 21, 12:16 PM.** Summer begins. The next issue of the *Meadowlark Messenger* will appear in late August.

