



The Meadowlark Messenger

June 2010 • Volume 27, No. 5

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

Lose Yourself Cleo and Steve D'Arcy Co-Presidents of Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS)

One of the best pieces of advice we were able to give our university students was to try to find occupations in which they could lose themselves. If your work or your hobby is an activity in which you can become so involved that you lose track of time and sometimes even place, then you have chosen it wisely. For us, bird watching is this kind of activity.

Take the Sunday morning Busey Woods/Crystal Lake Park bird walks, for example. We usually arrive just at (or shortly after) the 7:30 a.m. start time, having stayed in bed until the last possible moment. After Beth Chato has everyone introduce themselves and gives the CCAS announcements, Greg Lambeth begins the walk with an overview of what is in or moving through the parks this week that we should be on the lookout for. The group of usually 10 to 20 birders, amateurs to experts, first-timers to regulars, then heads off into either the woods or the park and the time warp begins.

On a recent walk we saw over 60 species of birds in Crystal Lake Park alone. Greg was able to entice 23 different species of warblers close enough for everyone in the group to get good looks. (We don't put a bird on our list unless we

have seen it well enough to clearly identify it, a qualification that often reduces our total "count" for the walk.) Highlights for us were a striking Black-throated Blue Warbler that hung around the "Magic Bridge," clearly intrigued by its song played on Greg's iPod, a Blackburnian Warbler with its brilliant Illini orange throat and upper breast, and several Magnolia Warblers with beautiful black "necklaces" on their bright yellow throats. That day we took a rather different route through the park and were rewarded by sightings of several different birds as well as of a raccoon sleeping on a low tree branch overhanging the path. Another highlight for us was watching Greg's daughter and her little dog "round up" about 70 Canada geese and their goslings and herd them into the lake.

As each walk progresses, people leave to go do yard work, attend church, or get breakfast. For us, we usually know it's time to quit when Steve's stomach begins to rumble! On that recent Sunday morning, however, the rumblings went unnoticed until we realized it was approaching noon and lunch would be more appropriate than breakfast. We had lost ourselves in watching birds for over 4 hours.

As we enter the summer season and CCAS activities wind down until fall, we hope that each of you takes the time to lose yourself, whether in

bird watching or some other activity. If you can, we know that your life will be enriched from the experience. Have a great summer and we'll see you in the fall!

**JUNE MEETING
Thursday June 10**

**SWALLOW WATCHING
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.

FIELD NOTES: April and May 2010 **Darin Eastburn** **Recent Bird Sightings**

This past month has been the height of the spring migration with many interesting species reported. Here are some of the highlights. In Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods birders reported Scarlet and Summer Tanagers; Willow and Alder Flycatchers; Blue-headed, Red-eyed, Warbling, Philadelphia, Yellow-throated, and White-eyed Vireos; Rose Breasted Grosbeak; Green Heron; Baltimore Oriole; Least flycatcher, Great-crested Flycatcher, Phoebe; Wood Duck; Swainson's Thrush and Wood Thrush; Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos. And of course the park has been host to many species of warblers including Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Blue-winged, Canada, Cape May, Cerulean, Chestnut-sided, Common Yellowthroat, Golden-winged, Louisiana Waterthrush, Magnolia, Mourning, Nashville, Northern Parula, Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Palm, Redstart, Tennessee, Wilson's, Yellow, and Yellow-rumped.

There has been a lot of excitement over the nesting of a pair of Sandhill Cranes at Heron Pond. Unfortunately, the nest was flooded out after a significant rainstorm. Other species seen at the pond include Cormorants; Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers; Soras; Least Bittern; Willets; Snowy Egret and Great Egret; Yellowlegs, and Solitary Sandpipers, and Bald Eagles. Birders at the Middle Fork River have reported Bobolinks, Red-tailed Hawks, Mallards, Canada Geese, Great Blue Herons, Red-winged Blackbirds and Pied-billed Grebes. Some interesting waterfowl have been observed at the university swine ponds including Dowitchers, Wilson's Phalarope, and Ruddy Ducks. At Weaver Marsh, Sora, Snow Goose, and Great Egret have been reported.

Backyard birding has been pretty good as well with the following species reported: Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Ovenbird, Magnolia Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-White Warblers, Redstarts, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Goldfinches, House Wrens, White-throated Sparrows, Catbird, Cardinal, House Finches, House Sparrows, Grackles, Mourning Doves, Robins, Downy Woodpecker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Pewee, Brown Thrasher, and Chuck-wills Widow. Elsewhere in the area Chimney Swifts, Tree Swallows, Peregrine Falcon, Canada Geese, Orchard Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, Crows, Turkey Vultures, and a rare Mountain Plover have been seen.



38th ANNUAL SPRING BIRD COUNT, Saturday MAY 8

This year's Champaign County Spring Count landed on a day with perhaps the worst weather conditions ever. Very strong, blustery winds and dark clouds meant no bird song and not many birds in flight. Thirty-three people braved these conditions and found 150 species of birds. Special species were three American Eagles and a Sandhill Crane. A Merlin and a Goldeneye Duck need to be documented. Some species were spotted by single observers in local backyards – the only Nighthawk and Chimney Swift were among these. Another was a family of Woodcock at Yankee Ridge subdivision. Last year's total was 158. The highest total was 167 in 1997. One hundred fifty is the lowest total since 1994's count of 143. Many thanks to all who helped out under poor conditions to contribute to a statewide snapshot of this year's bird migration.

--- Beth Chato, compiler for Champaign County

Audubon Nature Lore Shop

A new stock of binoculars is available. Also new are a series of Knowledge Card decks on subjects from Birds and Trees to Urban Wildlife.

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



Membership for 2010

Friend of Champaign County Audubon Society \$15.00 _____
(includes CCAS newsletter only)

 new renewal

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: _____

C0ZG500Z

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

Education Corner

Stacey Clementz, Education Chair (sclementz@ccfpd.org)

Champaign County Audubon Society is now on Facebook! To become a fan and get updates, please visit the "Champaign County Audubon Society" Facebook page.

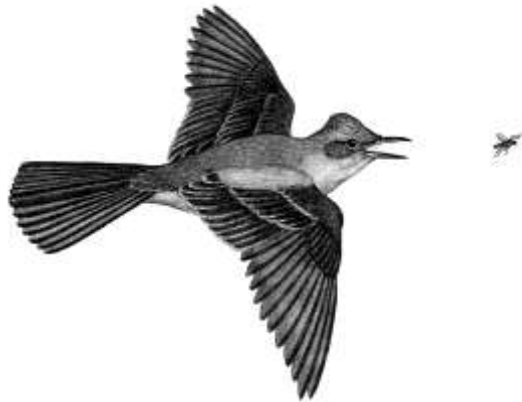


Parents & educators check out the education section of the National Audubon Society webpage for information on teaching in nature, great craft ideas and so much more. Go to <http://www.audubon.org/educate/educators/>.

2010 AUDUBON BIRDATHON

The results are in! “Town” (Beth Chato) and “Country” (Jim Smith) found 104 species in a tour of Jim’s Vermilion County. “Ghost Busters” Charlene Anchor, Janet Jokela and Elaine Regehr found 65 species in a tour of historic cemeteries. “The Big Sit” found participants Beez Gordon and the Chatos in the lookout tower at Heron Pond chalking up 45 species, including the exciting Sandhill Crane pair. Helen Parker used no gas in her bicycle tour of Urbana and found 58 species. The “Executive Team”, Caroline Mallory, Darin Eastburn and Steve D’Arcy, saw 44 species at the Homer Lake Preserve. The longstanding competition between the Urbana Park District and the Champaign County Forest Preserve District heated up this year. Both teams worked diligently with the Urbana Park District coming out on top with 124 species to the Champaign County Forest Preserve District’s count of 112.

Contributions to this year’s Birdathon are still welcome and can be sent to Champaign County Audubon Society at P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you.



Champaign County Audubon Society Website
Pam Leiter, CCAS Webmaster

The CCAS website has a new look! Please check it out at champaigncountyaudubon.org. All the information you need about chapter activities can be found on our website. And don’t forget to find us on Facebook!

Champaign County Audubon Society

Our chapter strives to 1) promote interest, enjoyment and understanding through education about all aspects of our natural environment and 2) actively encourage the protection of wildlife and the preservation and restoration of native habitat.

[About CCAS](#) [Membership](#) [Newsletter](#) [Board](#) [Contact Us](#) [Links](#) [National Audubon Society](#)

The banner features a green background with a white illustration of a bird perched on a branch on the left. The right side of the banner shows a field of yellow flowers. Below the banner is a navigation bar with seven green buttons containing white text.

Membership Corner Janet Jokela, Membership Chair

We would like to send special greetings to our new and renewing National Audubon members & CCAS Friends. Please welcome Eleanor Blackmon, Virginia Bradford, Bruce A. Brown, Sr., Pat Chapel, Roger Epperson, Eric Freyfogle, Robin Hall, Jerry Hayden, Kurt Hebel, Rob Kanter, Curtis Krock, Betsy & Peter Kuchinke, Rob Lurvey, Dorothy Neumann, Aiko Perry, Katherine Stout, Mary Tavis, Loren & Diane Wasson, Ruth Wene, and Jacqueline Worden. We look forward to seeing you at CCAS events—thank you for your support.

Become a new Friend or renew your present membership in Champaign County Audubon Society.

On January 1, 2009 a new membership policy for Champaign County Audubon Society began: The membership fee of \$15 for the local chapter is due at the beginning of each year. See membership form at the top of page 5. And please indicate if your membership is new or a renewal. Thanks!

2010 NOMINATING COMMITTEE Chair, Janet Jokela (jjokela59@hotmail.com)

Other members: Charlene Anchor, Pam Leiter, Jim Nardi

Please consider volunteering or recommending someone to serve on the CCAS Board.

Conservation Corner Helen Parker, Conservation Chair Oil and water

Nobody who has not been under a rock for the past month is unaware of the blowout of BP's Deepwater Horizon well that is sending huge quantities of oil into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. This is being called the largest oil spill since the Exxon Valdez--but that is not exactly accurate, since this is not a "spill" in the usual sense. The oil is continuing to pump out--and it will not stop until one (or more) of the attempts by BP to halt the process finally succeeds. It is, however, a disaster of the first magnitude. At the moment, we do not know just how bad things will be. We need better science as well as better technology. What we do know is that if and when the oil gets into the coastal marshes that are the nursery grounds for all the gulf fish and shellfish, it will seriously deplete the future stocks of said fish and shellfish. This means that the impacts of this oil will be felt for many years to come--not only for the wildlife that depend on these marshes for food and homes but also for the human fishing/shrimping industries. It is a sad "unintended consequence" of our modern society's addiction to oil.



Cranes and water

Cranes of all species are associated with water--and they need the right amount of it. The east-central Illinois birding community was saddened to learn that the Sandhill Cranes nesting at Heron Park got too much--their nest was flooded out. We hope they will try again, next year if not this. Meanwhile the Whooping Cranes wintering on the Texas gulf coast at Aransas suffered from too little water--fresh water flowing into the Gulf, that is. The blue crabs that form the crane's primary winter diet require the correct degree of salinity--which in turn depends on the fresh water flowing in. There has been a serious drought in the area the last few years--with the result that there has been too little fresh water inflow and too few blue crabs. There have been serious die-offs of wintering cranes. If only we could give them some of our excess!



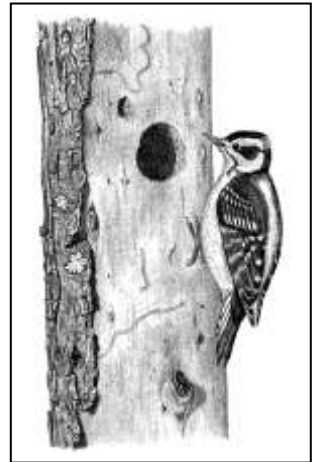
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Return service requested



Calendar of Events, June 2010

Thursday June 10, 6 PM. Potluck at Homer Lake. Swallow watching at Homer Lake, Walnut Hill Shelter (next to dam). Please bring your own table service, your own beverage and a dish to share. Swallow watching begins at 6 PM; Potluck at 6:30.

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER.

