



The Meadowlark Messenger

March 2011 • Volume 28, No. 2

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

The Elusiveness of Birds

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

Why are there some birds that everyone else can find, but always repeatedly evade your view? You know, those times when everyone else on the bird-walk sees the yellow-breasted chat, but it flies before you get your binoculars on it. Especially frustrating are those life-list birds that you know are in the area, but you can never seem to spot one. Shortly after moving to Illinois, many years ago, we were very excited at the prospect of seeing a scarlet tanager. We frequently would receive reports from friends and colleagues that they had seen one just the other day in a certain area, and we would try to find it, but to no avail. This went on for several years. At one point, we heard that characteristic "chik-brrr" while hiking in Moraine View State Park, but after an hour of searching we never did see the bird, aggravating! One summer while walking along a trail in the Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky one of us commented, "wouldn't it be great to see a scarlet tanager?" About two minutes later we rounded a corner, and there was a brilliant male scarlet tanager sitting on a branch, in plain view, about ten feet off the ground. Since that time, we have seen lots of these magnificent birds. We had very

March Program
Urbana Free Library
Auditorium
Thursday, March 3
7 pm
HOMER LAKE
NATURAL
PLAYSCAPE
Connecting People to
Nature



drawing by Charles Tunnicliffe from
Mereside Chronicle (1948)

presented by
Pam Leiter
Assistant Director of Museum &
Education Department,
Homer Lake Interpretive Center

similar experiences with indigo buntings and pileated woodpeckers – hearing them, but seemingly taking years before getting a glimpse.

Our current personal unicorns are snow buntings and Lapland longspurs. We follow the birdnotes list serve on a regular basis to find out what the local birders are finding in the area. For years, we have read of birders spotting large flocks of buntings and longspurs nearby, and so we hop in the car, binoculars and spotting scope in tow, and head for the area mentioned in the post. But alas, no buntings or longspurs are to be found. Our most recent attempt was earlier this month, when buntings and longspurs were sighted near Race Street and Old Church Road. Our first attempt to see them was thwarted by several inches of snow, but when the roads were mostly cleared we drove to the area on a Saturday morning. We saw a small flock of horned larks, but again, no buntings or longspurs. Are we not seeing them because we don't know exactly what we should be looking for, because we don't have our "bunting eyes" on, or are we just unlucky? Someday, hopefully this winter, we will finally find a flock. Surely, once we find the birds we will start seeing them everywhere. Then we can move on to the next elusive bird that everyone else seems to see all of the time, probably that darn screech owl.

Champaign County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803
217-367-6766
www.champaigncountyaudubon.org

Officers

Co-Presidents: Caroline Mallory & Darin Eastburn 344-2297
mallory.caroline@gmail.com
darin.eastburn@gmail.com
Vice President: Beth Chato, 344-6803
jbchato@illinois.edu
Secretary: Charlene Anchor, 359-8214,
charleneanchor@msn.com
Treasurer: John Dunkelberger
344-4973, jdunkel@hotmail.com

Committee Chairs

Conservation: Helen Parker, 367-3130
h-parker@illinois.edu
Constitution: Steve D'Arcy, 344-3639
s-darcy@illinois.edu
David B. Wilcoxon, 898-8623
dbw@hotmail.com
Education: Stacey Clementz, 896-2455,
sclementz@ccfpd.org
Field Trip: Charlene Anchor, 359-8214,
charleneanchor@msn.com
Mary Stech, 621-3492
mkstech@mchsi.com
Finance: Astrid Berkson
356-4647, astrid@insightbb.com
Habitat: Robert Vaiden, 344-9042
vaiden@isgs.illinois.edu
Membership: Janet Jokela, 352-3632
jjokela59@hotmail.com
Nature Shop: Beth Chato, 344-6803
jbchato@illinois.edu
Program: Dorothy Neumann, 344-1427
neumando3530@yahoo.com
Publications: James Nardi, 333-6590
j-nardi@illinois.edu
Publicity: Colleen Brodie
352-0805, wcbrodie@sbcglobal.net

Members at Large 2010-2011

Beez Gordon, 355-3402
Brian Threlkeld, 384-5164
abt5@columbia.edu
Albert Willms, 367-2432
willmsalbert@basicisp.net

Members at Large 2011-2012

Nancy Schroer, 720-0076
nschroer@frontier.com
Mary Stech, 621-3492
mkstech@mchsi.com
Brian Stearns, 215-4226
brian@sbstearns.us

Newsletter Coordinator: Ruth Walker,
328-1530

Phone Coordinator: Kyra Shair, 356-1265
kshair@ameritech.net

Webmaster: Pam Leiter, 344-6507,
leiterp@msn.com

BirdNotes Listserve Manager:

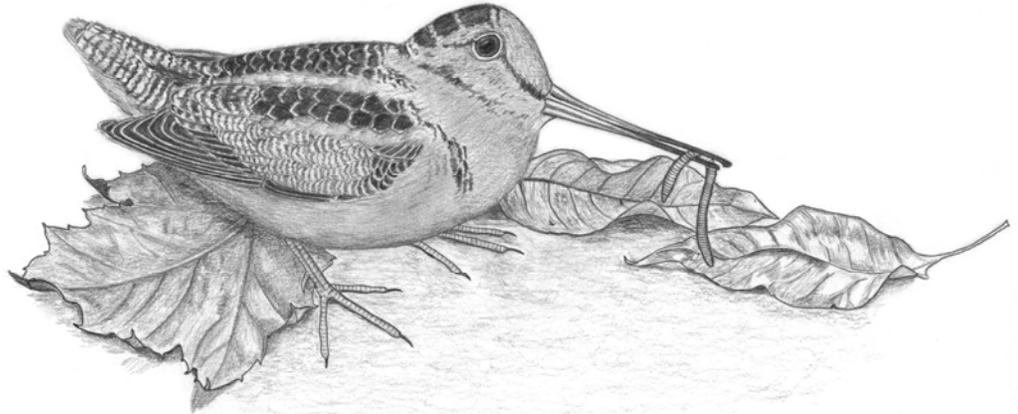
Dan Olson, 586-4389, forest@net66.com

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

Spring is on the way. There was a Woodcock at Meadowbrook Park on February 17. Lakes are still frozen, but White-fronted and Snow Geese, Wood Duck, and Hooded Mergansers were on the rivers. Weaver Park also had a pair of Hooded Mergansers. Heron Park had Sandhill Cranes, Mute Swans and a Killdeer. February 18 found Red-winged Blackbirds at Riverbend and Meadowbrook. Other sightings include a Red-shouldered Hawk at Homer Lake, and a Merlin near Champaign-Urbana. Winter visitors are still with us, including Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs on country roads, and Purple Finches at a feeder.



WOODCOCK WALK at MEADOWBROOK PARK WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 7-8 PM.

Meet at the Race Street parking lot at Meadowbrook Park.

SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS BEGIN

March 6 – May 29, 7:30 - 9 AM. Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods. Meet at Aniuta Purves Nature Center parking lot.

KENDEIGH GRANTS for 2011

The Audubon Board had voted to award two Kendeigh Grants for research in ornithology this year. Each grant will be for a maximum of \$1000. A Request For Proposal with application details will be available not later than Feb. 24.



THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count at the Anita Purves Nature Center was Saturday February 19th. Audubon members and the public watched the feeders throughout the day, and made short forays into the woods to tally up the numbers of each species of bird that we saw. For starters, an early birder came in with a photo of a Barred Owl from the woods, and Bluebirds and a Killdeer flew over the Center. A Turkey Vulture and a Pileated Woodpecker were spotted later in the day. The final entry was a Red-headed Woodpecker reported by a hiker at the end of the day to make a total of 28 species. A good time was had by all, and we topped the previous high tally of 27 from 2007. For the last 9 years, we have taken part in this nationwide event.

CONSERVATION CORNER Helen Parker, Conservation Chair

As is often the case, there is some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that some elements in Congress continue their assault on the environment. In particular, one bill seeks to roll back the EPA's authority to regulate power plant pollution. (The rationale seems to be "Regulation is BAD. Why they should think that breathing pollutants is good is beyond me.) In addition, there have been several anti-environmental riders attached to a continuing resolution to keep the government running. Fortunately, they will probably not survive the Senate.

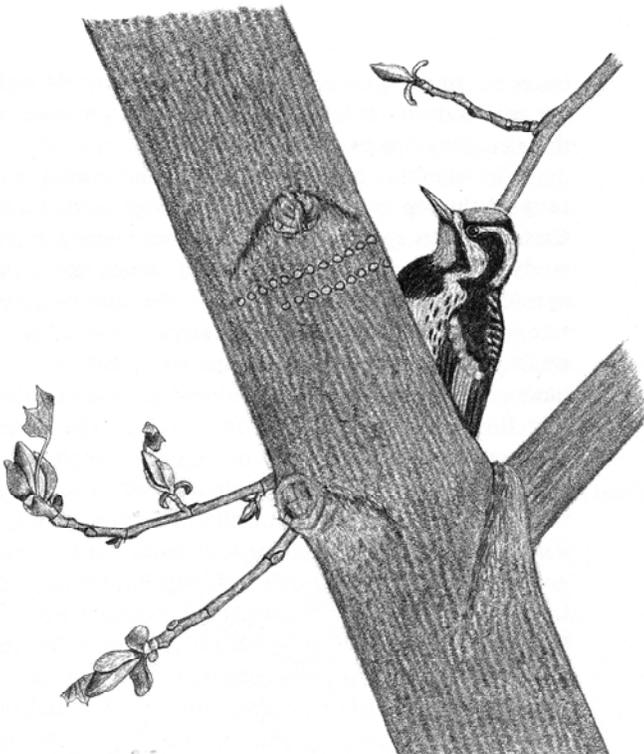
However, there are several pieces of good news. National Audubon reports that money from penalties assessed under the Clean Water Act will be used for restoration of the Gulf Coast. Purdue University has decided not to build a coal-fired power plant but to seek an alternative energy solution.

One of the "alternative energy" sources that has been widely advocated is wind power. However, wind turbines can present hazards to flying creatures such as birds and bats. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) established a committee to recommend guidelines for siting turbines; a draft version of these guidelines has now been issued. They can be found at www.fws.gov/windenergy. There is a 90-day public comment period. Warning: they are written in legalese--unless you have a REAL interest in siting wind turbines, I don't recommend trying to decode them. However, they are needed for wind power development, and FWS is to be commended for recognizing the problem and deciding on ways of dealing with it.

From the National Parks Conservation Association comes the message that the State of Wyoming has agreed to sell some parcels of "School Trust Land" within Grand Teton National Park to the Department of the Interior rather than to a developer. This will protect Grand Teton from suburban sprawl that would be the result of "development".

More good news from the Arctic: Shell Oil has canceled plans to drill in the Arctic Ocean in 2011.

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Observing A Sapsucker on a March Day

“When the day was warm and the sap flowed freely, he would have a regular debauch, sitting there by his wells hour after hour, and as fast as they became filled, sipping out the sap. This he did in a gentle, caressing manner that was very suggestive. He made a row of wells near the foot of the tree, and other rows higher up, and he would hop up and down the trunk as these became filled.”

- John Burroughs

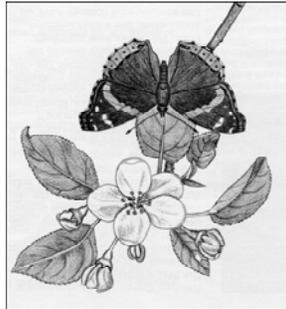
AUDUBON NATURE SHOP

Unique Nature-Related Gifts

ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER, 1515 NORTH BROADWAY, URBANA, IL

9-4 MONDAY-SATURDAY

SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



Think Spring!

We have a wide selection of bird, other wildlife and wildflower guides, helpful DVDs and CDs, as well as binoculars.

with text, photos, sounds, range maps and more. Go to our website www.champaigncountyaudubon.org for a link to this valuable resource.



ART EXHIBITION AT ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER

Meadowbrook: A Visual Diary

by local artist Tom Kovacs

Feb 5 - May 27, 2011, Anita Purves Nature Center

Opening Reception February 12, 2011 from 1-3 pm.

pencil drawings taken from Tom's diary.

From the artist: "Regardless of season and weather, each of my many walks through Meadowbrook Park brings at least one memorable moment, almost always unexpected, and always rewarding. I record these moments with camera, and later reinterpret them with pencil and paper, thereby revisiting each moment. Thus, using my graphite shorthand, I feel and touch tree bark, metal insects and live bird feathers, and dip my fingers in the icy waters of McCullough Creek."

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.)*

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

Membership for 2011

new renewal

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: _____ COZG500Z

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

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 Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS) Offers \$100 Mini-Grants!

NEW---Education Loan Box offered by CCAS

Birds have different types of beaks, eggs and feet to adapt to their unique lifestyles. Our loan kit can enhance your lessons on bird adaptations. Included are replicas of bird skulls, eggs, and tracks, as well as hands-on activities. This kit is appropriate for grades K-12.

To reserve the loan box for up to two weeks contact Stacey <<mailto:sclementz@ccfpd.org>> or call 217-896-2455. Loan box is housed at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center (formerly Environmental Education Center) at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.

For a list of other loan materials available from the Champaign County Audubon Society visit
www.champaigncountyaudubon.org and click on the Education Resources tab.

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OLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES Bob Vaiden, Habitat Chair

Help rebuild our shattered environment! Join other volunteers and the Urbana Park District (UPD) for **Stewardship Saturdays**. Help 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 12th: Busey Woods 9 -11 am. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center
 Weaver Park 1 – 3 pm. Turn right into park on grass "apron" on East Main near Smith Road, OR (if barricade is not removed), proceed East to Dodson Drive, turn south (right) on Dodgson; park along Dodson Drive, or turn right and park along Elm St.

March 26th: Meadowbrook 9 -11 am. Meet at Race Street parking lot
 Perkins Road 1 -3 pm. Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road



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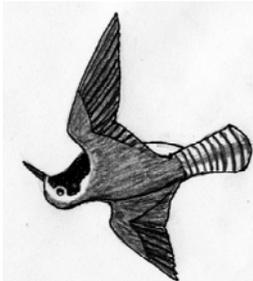
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Calendar of Events, March 2011



- Thursday** **March 3, 7 PM. General meeting** at Urbana Free Library Auditorium. **Homer Lake Natural Playscape**, presented by Pam Leiter, Assistant Director of Museum & Education Department, Homer Lake Interpretive Center.
- Wednesday** **March 16, 7-8 PM. Annual Woodcock Walk at Meadowbrook Park.** Meet at the Race Street parking lot at Meadowbrook Park.
- Thursday** **March 17, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Sundays** **March 6- March 27, 7:30 – 9 AM.** Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.