



The Meadowlark Messenger

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

President's Column

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

A Teachable Moment

By now many of you have seen, or at least heard, of the movie *The Big Year*. Based loosely on the book *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*, the movie tells the story of three men in very different circumstances trying to come out on top in the North American big year competition. He who sees the most birds in 365 days wins.

There are many ways to approach birding, and accumulating numbers of birds seen (or heard) is a popular one. Whether keeping life lists, backyard lists, or lists for specific trips (we like to keep a list of all the birds we see when on vacation), a lot of birders like to keep a tally of the number of species they observe. Keeping lists can be fun in that it adds an element of challenge to the activity. As one character in the movie says, "Americans have to make everything into a competition", and though there is some element of competition between birders, mostly this is just a competition with yourself. No one has to know how many birds are on your life list. However, working to improve your list also provides an incentive to learn more about the birds you are hoping to see. Obviously it helps to learn the identifying characteristics, so that you can identify the birds you

observe. But learning about behavior, migration times, vocalizations, and breeding habits also increases your chances of seeing and identifying more birds. This has the added benefit of improving your understanding of the importance of birds in our ecosystem and of maintaining habitats to support bird populations.

Birders vary in their level of obsession with keeping lists and striving for ever higher numbers. I have known some who get upset when a group decides to take a break during a birding trip or calls off a trip because of bad weather. However, a lot of us have a more casual approach to birding. Some enjoy seeing favorite species return during spring and fall migration just as much as finding new ones. There is something special about seeing that first male Red-breasted Grosbeak in full breeding plumage in the spring. Others mostly use birding as a reason to get out and experience nature. For these folks, seeing the wildflowers and looking for salamanders are just as interesting as identifying birds. And many of us enjoy seeing the same sparrows, finches, and doves visit our birdfeeders on a daily basis.

The Big Year has already got people talking about birding. I have had a few people ask me, "Hey, you like to watch birds don't you? Have you seen that *Big Year* movie?" This movie provides a "teachable moment" for those of us who enjoy birding. It gives us the chance to explain our passion and to educate

those who have not thought much about birds in the past. Moments like this do not come along often, so let's make the most of this opportunity.

NOVEMBER MEETING

at the Urbana Free Library
Auditorium

Thursday, November 3
7 PM

HOW TO ATTRACT PURPLE MARTINS TO YOUR BACKYARD

presented by
Ron LeGrand
who has hosted hundreds
of martins in his own
backyard



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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

Birders- I find that my notes for last month are very slim. I need to explore more sources.

Reports of Yellow Rails, perhaps at Clinton. Busey Walks this fall have been rewarding with sightings of over 40 species most Sundays. Highest number was 50 on October 2nd as many winter birds (Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Slate-colored Junco) return and summer and migrants (10 Warblers) were still here. Six Cormorants flew over. Over the fall bird walks, 97 species have been spotted with two weeks still to go.

THE LAST BIRD WALK of autumn 2011 through Busey Woods & Crystal Lake Park is **October 30, 7:30 AM.**

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, October 29. 10 AM. Field trip to Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area in Indiana to see **Sandhill Cranes**. This is an all day trip with a lunch stop at Willow Slough. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center, Urbana at 10 AM. Bring lunch. Dinner will be at a restaurant on return trip. We should arrive home about 10 PM.

Saturday, November 19. 7:30 AM. Annual Clinton Lake Field Trip. We will gather at the Anita Purves Center parking lot at 7:30 a.m. and return sometime in the late afternoon. It may be possible to do some carpooling again this year. Please email me at Gregorylambeth@mac.com if you need a ride. We will have some type of picnic lunch so please bring food and something to drink. Hopefully, the weather will be nice enough that we can sit out at a table somewhere as we have done in past years. I encourage everyone to bring warm clothing. It is often windy at Clinton Lake and winds off the lake can be very cold. It may also be muddy in places so please wear some type of boots. The biggest challenges in recent years have been road closures and hunting.

There are always interesting things to see at Clinton Lake in Nov, but our target species will include loons, grebes, scoters, ducks, geese, eagles and late migrant passerines. In past years we have seen some uncommon, even rare species, including Saw-whet Owl, Pacific Loon, Northern Shrike and Snow Bunting. I'm hoping for a good day.



AND A PREVIEW OF DECEMBER'S CALENDAR

The Christmas Bird Count for Champaign County will be **Saturday December 17.**



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. Carefully selected feeders for your birds. Wide selection of bird, and wildflower guides as well as nature books for children. The shop has been restocked for the holidays. Lots of new books, including the new *Crossley Guide to Bird Identification*. New cuddly fox, skunk, and raccoon toys, and lots more.

**CONSERVATION CORNER -- Helen Parker, Conservation Chair
And the Seasons Pass...**

This is the time of year when Nature is changing--summer is gone, fall has arrived, winter is around the corner. People who are obsessed with neatness are raking their leaves and "tidying up" their yards--removing dead flower heads, etc. The birds are migrating and many of the winter residents that are replacing the summer birds would be happy to eat some of those "weed" seeds you are trying so hard to get rid of. You just might want to keep some of them around--along with a brush pile from those shrubs you just trimmed.

Endangered Habitats

We talk a lot about endangered species--but we don't say much about endangered habitats. But a species has to have a habitat, and many of the ones that used to be available are becoming rare. The most obvious ones are wetlands--both fresh and salt water. Our tall-grass prairie has been reduced to tiny remnants. Oak savannas (the preferred habitat for red-headed woodpeckers) are definitely endangered. I won't go quite so far as to say that if we preserve the habitat the species will take care of themselves--but the habitat is a necessary condition. We have put so much of the planet to our own uses that large ecosystems have been perhaps irrevocably altered--but we can still keep smaller habitats that the other species that share this planet with us can find a place to live.

Madagascar

Off the east coast of Africa lies a large island called Madagascar, which is one of the most biologically unique places on the planet. It has been inadequately surveyed in the past for its biodiversity--but the World Wildlife Fund has just issued a report on discoveries made in the past decade. The results are astounding. In the past 10 years, scientists have found an astonishing 615 new species. These include 385 plants, 42 invertebrates, 17 fish, 69 amphibians, 61 reptiles, and 41 mammals. Perhaps needless to say, this biodiversity is threatened by habitat loss, as forests are cut for firewood and charcoal production. Aerial photographs show a 40 % decrease in forest cover since the 1950's. And many animals such as lemurs, tortoises and snakes are lost through capture and sale to the lucrative (and illegal!) international pet trade market. Honest, folks, you do NOT need a lemur as a pet!

For the Birds

Champaign County Audubon Society Supports Water Feature – Will You Help Too?

The CCAS board voted in October to support the upcoming naturalized water feature project at the Anita Purves Nature Center. This water feature will help individuals of all physical ability levels enjoy birds as they travel along the center's new accessible trail or relax in the center's bird observation room.

We have applied for grant funds to help with this effort, and will match those funds from our budget; up to \$660. If approved for the grant, a total of \$1320 will go toward the project, about 20% of the total \$7000 cost.

We Need Your Help!

We hope to raise at least another \$660 toward this effort through donations from our members to match the CCAS contribution. Please consider supporting this project through your tax-deductible donation. Donations can be made out to CCAS and sent to P.O. Box 882, Urbana, Illinois, 61803-0882; please note "Water Feature" on your check. Thank you.

Why Are There Birds Flying Around Our Homepage?

It's all part of the National Audubon Society's 'Birding the Net' campaign. Timed to the release of Hollywood's *The Big Year*, the campaign challenges people to find birds throughout the Internet. Birding the Net brings to the Internet the thrill of the chase found in real-world birding, challenging players to spot dozens of species that will be released from Oct. 10 through Nov. 7. Please visit our webpage at www.champaigncountyaudubon.org for more information and to participate.

AUDUBON BIRDSEED SALE

Prairieland Feeds, Rt. 45, Savoy

NOVEMBER 12-13

Saturday 8:30 - 6:30 & Sunday 10:30 - 5



No need to preorder.

Pick up an Audubon coupon at the store on seed sale date. Present it at the sales desk as you purchase and Audubon will receive a share. You can buy all you need for the season and Prairieland will keep it for future pickup.



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.)*

Our monthly newsletter, in print form, costs our chapter an average of \$284.30 for each issue. As an environmental organization, the Board would like to encourage members to receive the newsletter via e-mail or through our website: www.champaigncountyaudubon.org. Either way will save our chapter money that can then be used for environmental projects and nature education. If you just want to check the website for the newsletter and receive neither the print nor e-mail copy, contact John Dunkelberger at 344-4973 (leave a message on the answering machine) or at jdunkel@hotmail.com to have your mailing label pulled from our mailing list. By checking the website and clicking on the newsletter link, you can read the Meadowlark Messenger whenever you need information on meetings, field trips, or any of our other activities. Thank you!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES Bob Vaiden, Habitat Chair

Help rebuild our shattered environment! 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:**

November 12th: Busey Woods 9 -11 am. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center
 Weaver Park 1 – 3 pm. Turn right at entrance on East Main near Smith Road.

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 _____	new	renewal
<i>(includes CCAS newsletter only)</i>			
Friend of CCAS and National Audubon Society	\$35.00 _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>(includes "Audubon" magazine & CCAS newsletter)</i>			
My check for \$ _____ is enclosed, made payable to Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS) . Your information and NAS contribution will be forwarded to National.			
Name: _____		C1ZG500Z	
Address: _____		7XCH	
City: _____	State: _____	Zip: _____	(Please provide 9-digit zip code)

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

Send this application and your check to: Champaign Co. Audubon Society, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

Education Corner, Stacey Clementz

Education Program Specialist, Champaign County Forest Preserve District

Audubon Adventures

Generous donations from our members allowed CCAS to sponsor Audubon Adventures kits for local classrooms. This year, four area teachers have requested and received this valuable educational tool. For more information on Audubon Adventures visit <http://education.audubon.org/audubon-adventures>. Thank you so much.

Grant Opportunities

The Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant program can provide funding for you and your students to visit the natural wonders of our state. Teachers may apply for up to \$500 to be used for transportation and substitute teacher costs. Application deadline: January 31, 2012. Instructions and application form at <http://dnr.state.il.us/education/CLASSRM/grants.htm>.

Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Action Grant Program

The IDNR Division of Education is working in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the Illinois Conservation Foundation to expand the Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program! Due to this partnership, we are increasing the maximum available funds per Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant application to \$1,000! Application deadline: November 30, 2011. For more information, visit www.dnr.state.il.us/education/classrm/grants.htm.



The Nominating Committee is putting forward the following slate for our annual meeting and election of officers in December.

Co-Presidents: Caroline Mallory & Darin Eastburn

Vice President: Susan Stearns

Secretary: Charlene Anchor

Treasurer: John Dunkelberger

Members-at-Large (2-year terms):

Beez Gordon, Brian Threlkeld, Al Willms

Submitted by: Janet Jokela, John Dunkelberger, Brian Stearns, Pam Leiter (members of the Nominating Committee)

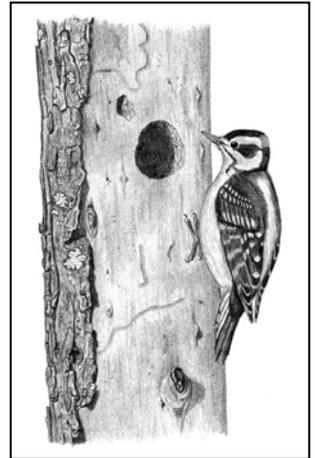


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Return service requested



Calendar of Events, November 2011

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- Sunday October 30, 7:30 AM.** The last bird walk of autumn at Busey Woods & Crystal Lake Park.
- Thursday November 3, 7 PM. General meeting** at Urbana Free Library Auditorium. Ron LeGrand will present a program on How to attract purple martins to your backyard.
- Sat. –Sun. November 12, 13. Audubon Birdseed Sale at Prairieland Feeds. Saturday 8:30 - 6:30 & Sunday 10:30 – 5.** No need to preorder. Pick up an Audubon coupon at the store on seed sale date. Present it at the sales desk as you purchase and Audubon will receive a share. You can buy all you need for the season and Prairieland will keep it for future pickup.
- Thursday November 17, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Saturday November 19, 7:30 AM. Annual Clinton Lake Field Trip.** We will gather at the Anita Purves Center parking lot at 7:30 a.m. and return sometime in the late afternoon. It may be possible to do some carpooling again this year. Please email me at Gregorylambeth@mac.com if you need a ride. We will have some type of picnic lunch so please bring food and something to drink.
- Thursday November 24. Thanksgiving.**

