



# The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

## Program

### Your Local Birds: A Comprehensive Study of the Bird Communities of Champaign-Urbana

Thursday, December 1, 2022, 7:00 PM –8:00 PM

Join us on Zoom; Meeting ID: 835 0727 9259

Password: CCAS



Do you like birds? Do you live in Champaign-Urbana or the surrounding area? If so, then tune in for this exciting talk by Dr. Henry Pollock about your local birds! Henry, along with CCAS President Colin Dobson and CCAS Conservation Director Zak Sutton, conducted a comprehensive survey of C-U’s birds in winter (January-February) and summer (June-July) 2022. Henry will present findings from the bird survey, including identifying critical areas around town for bird diversity as well as highlighting differences in bird community structure between Champaign and Urbana, public parks and private neighborhoods, and across seasons.

Dr. Henry Pollock is a postdoctoral researcher in the van Riper lab of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at UIUC. He has conducted bird research all over the world, and his current project focuses on understanding human-bird interactions in our local community!

**Remember that the December meeting is also the annual CCAS board election (see pg. 3)!**

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## Champaign County Audubon Society

### Officers

- President: Colin Dobson
- Vice President: Roger Digges
- Secretary: Jennifer Wick
- Treasurer: Todd Kinney

### Members at Large

- Beth Chato
- Megan Skrip
- (vacant)

### Committee Chairs

- Bylaws: Roger Digges
- Conservation: Zachary Sutton
- Education: (vacant)
- Field Trip: (vacant);  
Beth Chato, Colin Dobson, Brody Dunn
- Finance: Todd Kinney
- Membership: Brock Martin (Chair)
- Program: (vacant)
- Communications: Sara Johnson (Chair);  
Shoshie Bauer, Jeff Bryant (Birdnotes  
Listserv), Susan Pollock, Megan Skrip,  
Sarah Stewart

Champaign County Audubon publishes *The Meadowlark Messenger* nine times per year. **Comments regarding the newsletter, or articles for submission, are welcome.**

### Contact us!

P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803  
ChampaignCountyAudubon.org  
[mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org)

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## Field Notes

*Colin Dobson, CCAS President*

It's winter, everyone, and the end of the year is near! Hope everyone has been enjoying the winter birds along with the winter weather and is having a great holiday season! Dark-eyed Juncos and finches are everywhere so watch those feeders. Birds are around in good numbers!

In November we had two successful field trips/gatherings! The Owl Night was a success and besides having such a hit with a large crowd, we also banded a Northern Saw-whet Owl for most to see! Also, our Sandhill Crane trip was a blast as we watched thousands of cranes fly in to roost at Jasper-Pulaski!

Although we may not have any field trips planned in December, our Christmas Bird Count is December 17th, a Saturday, so reach out to us ([mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org)) if you'd like to participate! Also, look forward to many field trips and programs/gatherings in 2023, because we will be having so many more events to come in 2023 than in the last couple of years!



# December is CCAS' Annual Elections!

The Champaign County Audubon Society board is a low-pressure way to learn about conservation issues we face in Central Illinois and is an opportunity to use your skills for good! Want to get involved in conservation in our community? Curious about board leadership? We are currently seeking enthusiastic individuals who can help run our organization.

Our slate of candidates for the 2023 board will be voted on during our meeting on December 1.

## Officers

*President:* Colin Dobson

*Vice President:* Roger Digges

*Secretary:* Jennifer Wick

*Treasurer:* Todd Kinney

## Committee Chairs

*Bylaws:* Roger Digges

*Conservation:* Zak Sutton

*Education:* VACANT

*Field Trip:* VACANT

*Finance:* VACANT

*Membership:* Chair: Brock Martin

*Program:* Current Chair: VACANT

*Communications:* Sara Johnson

To learn more, sit in on a meeting, or join a committee, email Colin Dobson at [mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org).

## Thank You, Renewing Members!

*Cindy Duffy, Edward & Nancy Schneider*

*Bold indicates contribution beyond dues.*

SERVING ON OUR BOARD IS A GREAT WAY TO



Share your passion  
for nature



Gain hands-on  
experience in non-profits



Volunteer your skills  
and expertise

**Our Mission is to promote interest, enjoyment and understanding about all aspects of our natural environment.**

## Bird of the Month

*Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President*

The Great Horned Owl is not technically a snow bird. You can find it in our area year-round (and almost everywhere else in North America and much of South America). “Find” in this case usually means hearing rather than seeing the largest species of owl in this area, because it is nocturnal, although it does call at dawn and dusk when the sky is brightening, and they have been seeing hunting in broad daylight. One thing which makes Great Horned Owls a good December bird is that is the month when they are the most vocal, and you are most likely to hear their characteristic low-pitched “hoo-hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo.” We’ll explain why a little later. Also, listening for these owls is great training for “ear birding.” Since, as we learned last month, birds try very hard not to be seen (except by potential mates), birding by ear is an important skill for all birders from beginners to professionals. Great Horned Owls have a very distinctive call and can be heard a long distance away.

Great Horned Owls are large birds, the largest up to two feet in length and weigh two to five pounds. They have two long tufts atop their heads (which are not horns or ears, just feathers) which make them easy to see in silhouette when they are perched out on a branch or a tree top. Great Horned Owls are predators who eat mammals from the size of a mouse to a woodchuck, and birds from the size of robins to as large as other owls, even red-tailed hawks (fierce predators but with poor night vision). They also eat cats, rats, snakes, insects, fish—there are few animals they don’t eat.

We hear Great Horned Owls the most from late fall into early winter, when a mated pair (they mate for life) are vigorously defending their nest site before they lay their eggs. Of all the birds who nest in our area, they are the only ones who nest as early as January. This may seem like an odd time when temperatures can fall below zero Fahrenheit at night and snow or ice may cover

the parent bird incubating eggs. But it takes these aerial predators a long time to grow to a size and develop the skills to hunt prey well enough to survive, and they do so as other birds are beginning to leave the nest, a good time to be hunting.

Where can you find Great Horned Owls? They prefer a stand of mature trees, preferably with open areas nearby. These may occur in your neighborhood, a local park or preserve, or along a country road. You’re most likely to hear these owls calling at dawn or dusk. Finding their general location by sound, look for the dark silhouette of a bird with tall tufts perching at the end of a branch or top of a tree. You have found the bird of the month!

How are Great Horned Owls doing? According to Cornell Lab’s [All About Birds](#), their population has held steady over the past 60 years. Partners in Flight estimate their global population at 5.7 million birds and are of “low concern” in terms of threats to their health as a species.

While you can’t attract them with bird feeders (although they may feed on animals in your yard!), you may be able to attract them by building a nest box. Information about nest boxes can be found in Backyard Tips on the [Great Horned Owl](#) page in *All About Birds*.



## Cedars Planted to Improve Owl Habitat in Urbana

*Zak Sutton, CCAS Conservation Chair*

On Saturday, October 29th, we planted twenty red cedars between the Saline Branch and the south end of the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot. We were also able to clear some of the honeysuckle branches that were choking out another twenty or so 1- and 2-year-old cedars that were growing there naturally. With the cedars we are planning on adding in the spring, plus continued attention and collaboration with the Urbana Park District, that area could really be an attractive place for wintering owls in just a handful of years!

Interested in helping with future Conservation Committee activities? Reach us at [mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org)!



*Red cedars waiting to be planted. Photo by Zak Sutton.*



### Christmas Bird Count

CCAS has been participating in National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count for over 50 years! This year, we will be collecting data for our area on December 17th. Contact our president, Colin Dobson at [mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org) to get involved!

# Join Champaign County Audubon Society!

*Yes, I'd like to become a member!*

When you join the Champaign County Audubon Society, 100% of your dues and donations support our efforts (and they're tax deductible!).

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ CCAS Membership (\$15 due each January).

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation to CCAS

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

### ***Or Join Online!***

Save time by contributing via your mobile device or computer! [Visit our website to join or donate online.](#)

I am a new member     I am renewing my membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

CCAS members will be automatically enrolled to receive our newsletter by email; check this box if you would prefer to receive a **paper** copy.

Checks should be made payable to CCAS. Send this form and your payment to: CCAS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

### ***Our Mission:***

*Promote interest, enjoyment, and understanding of all aspects of our natural environment, and actively encourage the protection of wildlife and native habitats.*

## Join National Audubon Society

When you join National Audubon Society you receive one year of Audubon magazine. You also have the option to receive local birding and community events delivered to your inbox from CCAS.

- **New members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/nas-g50> or call 1-844-428-3826. Please tell them Champaign County Audubon Society sent you using our chapter code "G50."
- **Renewing members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/renew-nas> or call 1-844-428-3826.



## Audubon

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