



The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

Bird-Friendly Shrubs Planted by CCAS Volunteers

Zak Sutton, CCAS Conservation Chair

On April 29, twelve volunteers from CCAS partnered with the Urbana Park District to plant over 200 live stakes of shrubs that benefit birds (Elderberry, Viburnum, and Buttonbush) near the bridge entering Busey Woods in Urbana. These will help to replace invasive honeysuckle that was removed, stabilize the bank of the creek there, benefit the local ecosystem, and most importantly help the birds.

Thank you to our volunteers and to the Urbana Park District for collaborating with us!



View past programs on our YouTube channel. Access details and more information can be found on our website: www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/birdwalks-and-programs

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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
- Finance: Todd Kinney
- Membership: Brock Martin
- 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

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Field Notes

CCAS Sunday Morning Bird Walk recorded by Jenny Applequist on May 7. Crystal Lake Park, Urbana, Champaign, IL, US, May 7, 2023, 7:23–10:23 am; Protocol: traveling, 2.772 miles, 89 species; near fallout conditions.

Canada Goose 30	Northern Rough-winged Swallow 2	Ovenbird 2
Mallard 6	Tree Swallow 2	Northern Waterthrush 3
Eurasian Collared-Dove 1	Barn Swallow 8	Golden-winged Warbler 3
Mourning Dove 4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 8	Blue-winged Warbler 2
Yellow-billed Cuckoo 1	White-breasted Nuthatch 4	Black-and-white Warbler 5
Chimney Swift 5	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 10	Tennessee Warbler 8
Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1	House Wren 8	Orange-crowned Warbler 1
Killdeer 3	Carolina Wren 2	Nashville Warbler 12
Spotted Sandpiper 1	European Starling 20	Common Yellowthroat 2
Great Blue Heron 1	Gray Catbird 8	American Redstart 5
Green Heron 1	Veery 2	Cape May Warbler 1
Turkey Vulture 12	Gray-cheeked Thrush 3	Northern Parula 5
Cooper's Hawk 1	Swainson's Thrush 10	Magnolia Warbler 3
Broad-winged Hawk 1	Wood Thrush 1	Blackburnian Warbler 8
Belted Kingfisher 1	American Robin 25	Yellow Warbler 5
Red-headed Woodpecker 3	House Sparrow 5	Chestnut-sided Warbler 5
Red-bellied Woodpecker 3	House Finch 3	Blackpoll Warbler 5
Downy Woodpecker 3	American Goldfinch 10	Palm Warbler 35
Hairy Woodpecker 1	Chipping Sparrow 10	Yellow-rumped Warbler 60
Northern Flicker 4	White-crowned Sparrow 3	Yellow-throated Warbler 2
Least Flycatcher 2	White-throated Sparrow 30	Black-throated Green Warbler 8
Eastern Phoebe 3	Song Sparrow 1	Summer Tanager 1
Great Crested Flycatcher 5	Lincoln's Sparrow 1	Scarlet Tanager 6
Eastern Kingbird 3	Swamp Sparrow 2	Northern Cardinal 5
Yellow-throated Vireo 2	Eastern Towhee 1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak 12
Blue-headed Vireo 6	Orchard Oriole 3	Indigo Bunting 10
Warbling Vireo 8	Baltimore Oriole 15	Dickcissel 2
Red-eyed Vireo 3	Red-winged Blackbird 12	Flyovers
Blue Jay 15	Brown-headed Cowbird 25	
American Crow 8	Common Grackle 5	
Carolina Chickadee 1		
Tufted Titmouse 5		

Bird of the Month

Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President

While April featured Champaign County's smallest summer resident, June calls attention to its second largest and very recognizable bird, the Great Blue Heron. This tall, long-legged heron can be found near or in permanent streams, lakes, and ponds. Even from a distance, the great blue (actually blue-gray) with its distinctive S-shaped neck and long "dagger-like" bill can be easily identified as it stands stock-still waiting for its prey—fish, frogs, snakes, anything in the water—to come within reach. Then it strikes suddenly with that lethal bill and pulls its meal out of the water. Even when the bird is flying far off, its slow, majestic wingbeats, tell you it's a Great Blue Heron 99+% of the time. Very rarely you may see our county's largest bird, the Sandhill Crane, easily identified by its long straight (not S-shaped) neck and its iconic rolling, bugle-like call.



Great Blue Heron. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

2 to 6 eggs, and she and her mate will incubate them for about 4 weeks. Both adults will feed the nestlings for another 7 to 12 weeks, before young great blues are ready to forage for themselves.

The best place to find Great Blue Herons in Champaign County is any permanent stream, lake, or pond, although they may also hunt in temporary bodies of water. Since they don't eat anything you might buy for your bird feeder(s), there are only two ways to attract them to your yard. One way is to buy property near a permanent body of water, preferably heavily wooded without much human activity. The other way is to build a fish pond, which, unfortunately will soon be a fishless pond unless you provide places for your fish to hide from these skilled hunters, something like a length or two of pipe. Even then, your fish may still prove to be a feast for herons. Providing seed or suet for songbirds is one thing, buying expensive fish every few weeks quite another! There are plenty of fish for great blue herons in our rivers and larger wetlands.

How are Great Blue Herons doing? Their population is stable at around 700,000 birds and has slowly increased over the past half century. However, according to [All About Birds](#), "Because Great Blue Herons depend on wetlands for feeding and on relatively undisturbed sites for breeding, they are vulnerable to habitat loss and human....intrusions that can disrupt nesting colonies." Take some time to seek out these remarkable birds this summer in wetlands or in the sky in the early morning or late evening as they travel to and from feeding sites and be an advocate for protecting wetlands.



Great Blue Heron. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

Unlike the other species we have learned about in Bird of the Month, Great Blue Herons nest in colonies that can range in size from just a few nests to more than 500, all located high in tall trees. Herons will come back to these nests year after year until, eventually, the trees begin to die, the nests begin to fall apart, or there is too much human interference. Because these magnificent birds are sensitive to people getting too close to their heronries, it's best, if you find one, to keep your distance, and probably not mention its location. Herons locate colonies near good food sources so they don't have to fly far from their nests to catch prey for their young. Great Blue Heron males gather sticks from the ground, trees, shrubs, or even unguarded nests, and give them to the female who can take from 3 to 14 days to weave them into a foundation or add them to an existing nest, then create a nest cup from softer materials. Nests range in size from 20 to 48 inches, depending on how many times it's been added on to. The female will lay

Kendeigh Grant Awards

Each year, CCAS offers grants in honor of S. Charles Kendeigh for ornithology research in Illinois. Thanks to the generosity of our donors who make these grants possible, we were able to award \$2,000 to each recipient. Congratulations to this year's awardees.



**Lauren Leischner,
MS Student, Illinois
State University**

*Project Title —
Identifying the effect of
individual quality on the
production of a second
brood in house wrens
(Troglodytes aedon)*

A population's response to a change in climate depends on its life history characteristics and which factors affect reproductive success, such as diet and the number of eggs in a nest. Double-brooded female birds that lay two clutches of eggs in a season often lay their first brood early in the season, with the frequency of double brooding decreasing as the season progresses. My objective is to determine whether differences in individual quality, in addition to timing, explain why some female house wrens produce two broods and others do not, even if they have enough time. My hypothesis is that variation in double-brooding is affected by differences in female quality. Thus, my research addresses a long-standing question in the fields of ornithology and evolutionary biology that is particularly relevant in times of climate change.



**Cullen Mackenzie,
PhD Student,
Southern Illinois
University**

*Project Title — Impact of
prescribed burns on snake
predation on grassland bird
nests in southern Illinois*

Decreases in natural disturbances, such as fires, have contributed to a decline in tall grass prairie ecosystems and, consequently, grassland bird biodiversity. Another threat to grassland bird populations is snake predation. My project will study the impact that prescribed burns have on grassland bird nesting success as well as grassland snake biodiversity, nest predation, and habitat use at Burning Star State Management Area in southern Illinois. A combination of methods will be used, including bird point count surveys, nest monitoring, cover boards for snakes, and snake telemetry on prairie kingsnakes or black racers at recently burned and unburned sites. This project is important for the conservation management for the most rapidly declining bird guild in North America and the less studied grassland snake communities found in tall grass prairie ecosystems.



Welcome, New Members!

*Christine Winkless, Gabriel Nardie**

Thank You, Renewing Members

Arlene Halfhide, Susan Kiddoo, Ellen McDowell*, Barbara Ramsey*

**Special thanks to members who donated above and beyond annual dues.*

Thank You, Donors to our Educator Mini-Grants!

*Irene Bullars
Sandra Volk*

Bird-A-Thon Fundraiser Supports Kendeigh Grants

Since 1982, the Kendeigh fund has supported over \$40,000 in research projects on Illinois birds. Topics have ranged from the impact of cowbird nest predation to the varied problems of declining grassland birds. Many grant recipients have gone on to prestigious careers in the field of natural history.

About Dr. Kendeigh

Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh, eminent ornithologist, was a renowned professor of zoology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Before retiring in 1973, he had advised a total of 51 doctoral students and 65 masters students.

Kendeigh was a charter member, president, and board member of CCAS, president of the Wilson Ornithological Society and the Ecological Society of America, vice president of the American Ornithologists Union (now known as the American Ornithological Society), and co-founder of The Nature Conservancy and Animal Behavior Society.



Barn Swallow. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

Spring Bird Count and Bird-A-Thon

The *Spring Bird Count* took place on Saturday, May 6, and 21 people participated. Details will be posted to the CCAS website.

Bird-a-Thoners for 2023 include UPD and CCFPD, Betsy and Pete Kuckinka, and the Oldtimers team of Beth Chato and Helen Parker.

If you would like to contribute to this year's Bird-a-Thon fundraising event, visit the CCAS website for more details and to make a contribution:

<https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/spring-birdathon>.

Volunteers Needed

Please consider serving on a CCAS committee as a member or chair in order to support our organization and our community.

Committee meetings are held on an as-needed basis to plan and coordinate activities for the CCAS membership. Check out a committee and learn how you can engage with our local efforts or attend our next Board meeting to learn more.

- *Communications*: Print and email newsletter, email announcements, website maintenance, graphic design, social media management and outreach
- *Conservation*: Funding local projects, facilitating workdays, helping select Kendeigh Grant recipients, monitoring legislative and administrative actions that affect the environment
- *Education**: Advertising and selecting Mini-Grant recipients, liaising with local schools, youth education
- *Field Trip**: Coordinating short- and long-distance field trips, assisting with Bird Walks and outdoor programs
- *Finance*: Assisting with membership, budgets, auditing, taxes, database needs, and financial reports
- *Programs**: Contacting potential presenters, organizing and assisting with events, coordinating promotion and advertisement.

*Chair needed.

For more information: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/volunteer> or mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org.

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

☐ 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!

Or Join Online!

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

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.



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