



# The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

## April Program

### Kendeigh Grant Presentations

Thursday, April 4; 7:00 pm  
Zoom meeting ID: 833 0787 7940  
Passcode: CCAS

Recipients of our 2023 grant awards will present their research projects. Join to learn about the research we are helping to fund.



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

Lauren Leischner conducts research with the house wren population in the Mackinaw study area.

Some house wren females go on to produce a second brood after successfully rearing a first brood. This is beneficial because raising a second brood increases the chance that some offspring will reproduce and carry on her DNA. However, surprisingly, not all females do so. Lauren studies the factors that contribute to whether an individual produces a

second brood: timing and individual quality. Lauren Leischner is a graduate student at Illinois State University in the Department of Biological Sciences and laboratory of Pirmin Nietlisbach.



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

Cullen Mackenzie is a PhD student in the Eichholz laboratory at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Cullen’s research is focused on anthropogenic disturbance

ecology and community-related interactions. Current work investigates the potential effects prescribed burn management has on tall grass prairie snakes and associated flora and fauna in southern Illinois. This project aims to better understand the relationship between grassland bird nesting success, prescribed burns, and snake predation in tall grass prairie ecosystems. In his free time, Cullen enjoys swimming, biking, hiking, dancing, and building naturalistic terrariums.

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

### Committee Chairs

- Bylaws: Roger Digges
- Conservation: Zachary Sutton
- Education: Janet Enos
- Field Trip: Aerin Tedesco; Beth Chato, Colin Dobson
- Finance: (vacant)
- Membership: Brock Martin
- Program: Elizabeth Rodriguez
- Communications: Colin Dobson (Chair); Jeff Bryant (Birdnotes Listserv), Susan Pollock (newsletter), Megan Skrip (webmaster)

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)

### Get this newsletter in your inbox!




Would you like to go paperless and help our funds go further? Please visit the [Membership](#) page on our website and enter your name and email address.

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## Field Notes

*Aerin Tedesco, CCAS Field Trip Chair*

CCAS has some great bird walks in the works! In addition to our weekly Sunday morning walks at Crystal Lake and Busey Woods, we'll be offering a loons and woodcock walk in late March (see our events calendar for details on this activity and other coming events: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/all-events>). Migration will be picking up soon! Already species such as Rusty and Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, and Killdeer are making their way to our neck of the woods. We will be sure to schedule some great field trips to show folks these great birds and other migrants and get them familiar with some of the best birding spots in Champaign County. Stay tuned for more details on our upcoming programs.

# Native Plant Festival & Sale

**Saturday, May 4th | 9am until 3pm**  
**Parkland College | 2400 W Bradley Ave,**  
**Champaign, IL 61821**



Shop for native plants

Meet with local conservation experts

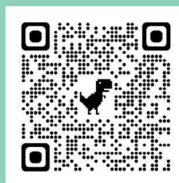
Attend an environmental-focused workshop

Learn about pollinators

Hands-on activities

Craft and honey vendors

Food trucks & more!



For more information scan this QR code!



## Bird of the Month

*Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President*

April's bird of the month is the first member of the flycatcher family I've introduced in this series, flycatchers getting their name from specializing in catching insects on the fly. Like another flycatcher, the Eastern Wood Peewee, you can identify the **Eastern Phoebe** when it says its name. Unlike the wood peewee's melodious pee-uh-wee, the phoebe's call is a hoarse fee-bee. Once you hear it, you never forget it.



*Eastern Phoebe. Photo by Jeff Bryant.*

While, as new birders, we tend to identify birds by the colors and patterns of their plumage, it is helpful to also build a knowledge of bird songs and calls. As I once told a group of teenage birders, "Remember when you're looking for birds that they don't want you to find them. To them, you're a giant predator." Which means you will hear far more birds than you can see.

While the variety and sheer volume of birdsong can be overwhelming at times, particularly in the spring, the Eastern Phoebe's distinctive raspy call stands out.

So, where can you find phoebes? You will usually spot these common flycatchers in open woodlands, often at the edge of the woods, near water, and usually not far from human structures. Before people began creating houses and barns with eaves, decks, bridges, and other covered environments, phoebes nested underneath

rock edges to shelter from the weather. Today you are likely to find them using our homes and other covered structures for nesting. Most years I have found them near all three steel bridges at Meadowbrook Park, and often near the farmhouse.

To spot a phoebe, follow that distinctive call and/or look for a small bird perched on an outside branch or twig of a tree. It will be grayish above, whitish below, with no white bars on its wings, no white ring around its eyes, and a head darker than the rest of its body. Like all flycatchers, a phoebe will come and go to the same perch. Unlike any other flycatcher, phoebes have the habit of "pumping" their tails up and down while perching.

Once she has chosen a safe and dry site, it will take the female phoebe five to fourteen days to build a nest out of mud, moss, and leaves mixed with grass and animal hair. She will lay two to six eggs, which will hatch in a little over two weeks, and the nestlings will stay in the nest for two to three more weeks.

While you can't attract phoebes to your yard by offering them food, you can create habitats that attract the kind of flying insects they eat. On the website [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) you can also find out how to build phoebe-sized nesting structures in your yard.

Because Eastern Phoebes coexist with people so well, their numbers have remained stable, with an estimated population of 35 million individuals. However, we should continue to work on preserving habitat for and reducing pesticides that kill flying insects to keep the phoebe population strong.

**WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY**  
 Mist Netting Demo  
**SATURDAY, MAY 11**  
**9-11 A.M.**  
 Interpretive Center,  
 Homer Lake Forest Preserve

FOREST PRESERVES  
 CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

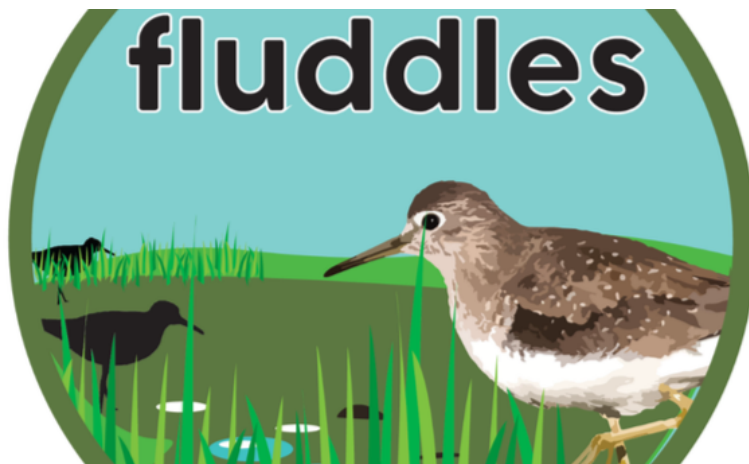


## *Fluddles* Documentary Film Viewing

### Co-sponsored by GPF and CCAS

Come see *Fluddles*, a new documentary film from the producers of *The Magic Stump*. Grand Prairie Friends and Champaign County Audubon Society are so excited to team up to present this showing. Additionally, we will be joined by filmmaker Bob Dolgan to share behind-the-scenes information on the project.

“*Fluddles* chronicles the wildlife of agricultural wetlands of Illinois. Sometimes simply described as ‘big puddles,’ fluddles appear in the spring and fall and provide habitat and forage for a diversity of waterfowl and shorebird species. *Fluddles* takes viewers on a journey to these secret, oft-fleeting wildernesses in a time when Illinois has lost 90% of its original wetlands. *Fluddles* features those who enjoy the beauty of wetlands while showcasing the movement under way to construct more wetlands, which provide critical habitat, reduce flooding and erosion, and help to ensure healthier waterways,” —Turnstone Impact.



April 26, 2024, 4:00–6:00 pm  
Champaign Public Library  
200 W Green St., Champaign

For more info: <https://www.grandprairiefriends.org/events/fluddles-film-viewing-spring-membership-meeting>.

### Welcome, New Members!

*Maxine He, Trevor Kerrins*

### Renewing Members

*Elaine Lutz, Edward Schneider, Jackie Wilen, Albert Willms*

### Renewing Members with Donation

*Jane Amundsen, Jan Houston, Mark Remi Koster, Iris Swanson*

### Special Thanks for Donation

*Edmund Sutton*

### Eurasian Wigeon Sighted

On March 10 and 11, a Eurasian Wigeon was found at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. This is the first time this species has been documented in Champaign County.

A description and a range map for the Eurasian Wigeon can be found at [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eurasian\\_Wigeon/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eurasian_Wigeon/overview).

To learn about rare birds visiting the area, sign up for eBird’s rare bird alerts at <https://ebird.org/alerts>.

## Coming Events

See our online calendar for more info: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/all-events>.

### Sunday Morning Bird Walks

*Sundays, March 3–May 26; 7:30–9:00 am  
Anita Purves Nature Center, Urbana*

All ages and skill levels welcome. Meet in the parking lot at Anita Purves Nature Center, and walk with Champaign County Audubon Society leaders to search for birds in Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park. Learn and practice basic bird watching and identification techniques. Bring a pair of binoculars or borrow a pair from CCAS at the beginning of the walk. If a later arrival works better for your schedule, please feel welcome to seek out and join the group on these informal walks.

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### CCAS Volunteer Event: Invasive Woody Removal

*Saturday, April 13; 9:00–11:00 am  
Interpretive Center at Homer Lake Forest Preserve*

CCAS volunteers are invited to help the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) remove woody invasive plants from Homer Lake Forest Preserve! Work will likely take place along the Oak Ridge Trail or the Timberdoodle Trail. Please contact CCAS Conservation Chair Zak Sutton ([zaksutton2@gmail.com](mailto:zaksutton2@gmail.com)) with any questions.

### CCAS Board Meeting

*Monday, April 15, 2024, 7:00 pm*

All CCAS members are welcome to attend board meetings; if you are interested in how to join, please email [mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org).

### Earth Day for Everyone

*Saturday, April 20; 1:00–4:00 pm  
Crystal Lake Park, Urbana*

Show some love for our home planet by celebrating Earth Day as you enjoy a springtime stroll through Crystal Lake Park. Enjoy live music, hands-on activities, and demonstrations by local community groups! For more info: <https://www.urbanaparks.org/events/free-earth-day-for-everyone---2024/>.

### Illinois Spring Bird Count

*Saturday, May 4*

Spring Bird Count (SBC) is a yearly bird count that consists of volunteers conducting bird censuses on the Saturday that falls between May 4 and May 10. Each county has a compiler responsible for recruiting volunteers and assigning them areas to count within their county. Beth Chato ([ejchato@gmail.com](mailto:ejchato@gmail.com)) is the compiler for CCAS. For more information about Spring Bird Count, see <https://spring-bird-count.inh.illinois.edu/>.

### Native Plant Festival and Sale

*Saturday, May 4; 9:00 am–3:00 pm  
Parkland College*

This Native Plant Festival and Sale aims to provide the resources for people to establish their own pollinator gardens. Environment-based organizations will be present to discuss how attendees can shape their impact on the environment. There will be workshops about plant photography and biodiversity, native plants available for purchase, and more. For more info: <https://allevents.in/champaign/native-plant-festival-and-sale/200026212412003>.

### Bird-a-Thon

*May 5–12*

The Bird-a-Thon is CCAS's annual fundraiser where teams eagerly search for as many bird species as they can find. Pledge donations are based on the number of species seen or a flat amount. Please participate or choose a team and pledge your support! Bird-a-Thon contributions go toward the CCAS Community-Supported Fund for Research, Education, and Conservation. For more info: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/spring-birdathon>.

# 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 our website.  
[\*Visit our website to join or donate online.\*](#)

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.

Check this box if you would be interested in learning about volunteer opportunities with CCAS.

Check this box if you agree to have your name listed in the CCAS newsletter for giving beyond membership dues.

I am a new member.

I am renewing my membership.

Make check payable to CCAS and send with this form to: CCAS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882.

***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.

