

Bird's-Eye View

July
August
1998



The Newsletter of The Peoria Audubon Society...

A Chapter of National Audubon since 1981

Ornithological-Audubon Chapter of The Peoria Academy of Science since 1930

A Trip to Midewin

by Tracy Fox

On June 13th, Maury Brucker, Emiko Yang, and Rick and Tracy Fox visited Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, the site of the former Joliet Arsenal. At the time the arsenal closed, responsibility for the site passed to the U.S. Forest Service working in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Natural History Survey.

Midewin is the first "National Tallgrass Prairie" and management objectives are primarily focused on creating habitat for grassland birds through prairie restoration on an unprecedented scale. Currently, visits are limited to organized tours due to a lack of facilities and continuing military clean-up operations.

The tour paired Peoria Audubon with visitors on a Bird Conservation Network field trip. It was led by Pat Welch and Larry Stritch of the U.S. Forest Service, Jim Herkert of the Illinois Endangered Species Board, and Chris Whelan of the Illinois Natural History Survey. This summer, Chris is actively searching the site for nesting activity and located many of the site's specialties on the tour.

Highlights included Loggerhead Shrikes, Grasshopper Sparrows, Dickcissels, Upland Sandpipers, Western Meadowlarks, Bell's Vireos, Henslow's Sparrows, Sedge Wrens, Bobolinks, and Orchard Orioles. All of these species are grassland birds whose populations are in severe decline in Illinois and other portions of their ranges. Seeing so many actively breeding grassland species within three hours clearly illustrated the various types of grassland habitat (short grass, tall grass, shrubby) needed by different species. It is encouraging that these requirements are being factored into the Midewin restoration efforts from day one. Current work includes removal of invasive species (multiflora rose, autumn olive, etc.) and "farming" single species plots of prairie forbs and grasses to provide the huge quantities of seed needed for restoration. It will be exciting to watch the evolution of the site in the coming years.

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Critical Habitats... part IV

by Maury Brucker

Prairie, once the predominant landscape in Central Illinois, had a group of associated birds adapted to the open spaces of grasslands and shrubs. Some birds such as the prairie chicken are almost gone from the area. Others such as Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink and Henslow's Sparrow adapted somewhat to our pastures and hayfields but are now uncommon or rare. The brown-headed cowbird adapted with a vengeance and now parasitizes the nests of many of our passerines and the horned lark also greatly increased with cultivated bare fields.

Most of the prairie birds require large amounts of open habitat for breeding. Some require specific structure of the habitat such as short grass for Grasshopper Sparrows and Upland Sandpipers. Henslow's Sparrows need scattered shrubs or weedy patches for breeding. Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls need large numbers of prey in grassland. With intensive crop cultivation and improved pastures, large areas of suitable grassland no longer exists in our area. Although strip mined areas with brome grass looks good to us, very few prairie birds seem interested.

While we can do little as individuals or small groups in facing the requirements for large open areas, several large areas are being managed partly for prairie bird habitat in other parts of the state. The prairie chicken sanctuary near Newton, Ill. is struggling to keep the last population of prairie chickens viable. Goose Lake Prairie State Park has the largest amount of unplowed prairie and attracts some of the smaller prairie birds. Wildlife Prairie Park manages more for large grazing animals than for birds. The Nature Conservancy protects and is restoring 100 acres in Nachusa Grassland. Recently two Army Depots at Joliet and Savanna will be restored to large prairie areas. Joliet now named Midewin already has the largest population of breeding upland sandpipers the state. Visiting and supporting these large restorations and watching for migrant prairie birds are our best opportunities for seeing prairie birds.

Species Spotlight...

Wood Thrush

by Brenda Onken

First of all, a BIG THANK-YOU goes out to all of the people who sponsored my Birdathon Team. I greatly appreciate it and Peoria Audubon thanks you for your support. The warblers and other migrants seemed to take their time getting here this spring. I managed to see several species, but they weren't in great numbers.

The Spring Bird Count also reflected the low numbers of birds, but you go out and have a good time anyway. I also managed to see a few varieties of snakes, which I find interesting. With summer in full swing, there doesn't seem to be a tree around without a Robin in it. They are nesting in both my front and back yards. Talk about territorial wars!

Also a Screech Owl flying around in the evening keeps the robins in a state of uproar. Usually the robins are joined in protest by a local Brown Thrasher, grackles, cardinals, house wrens, and goldfinches. At nesting time there is no way that this little gray Screech Owl is going to be inconspicuous.

Another thrush that nests and raises its young here is the wood thrush. This bird inhabits mostly dense deciduous woodlands. The Wood Thrush is a pretty, rusty-brown bird with numerous, dark spots on the breast. All thrushes have melodious songs. His song is flutelike, with 3 to 5 notes, then ending with a trill. They seem to like to sing at dusk and their song echoes through the woods. It's always a treat to hear.

Bird-Tip: A bird bath provides both a place for drinking and cooling for our backyard birds. Keep your birdbath cleaned and filled at all times.

Sometimes I have to refill mine a couple of times a day. For added attractiveness, attaching a small hose dripping water, or a recirculating pump will add water noise to your yard and bring in more birds. Have a great Summer!



Upcoming Meetings...

No Membership Meetings in June, July and August. See you in September!

Wednesday, August 12, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Peoria Audubon Board Meeting

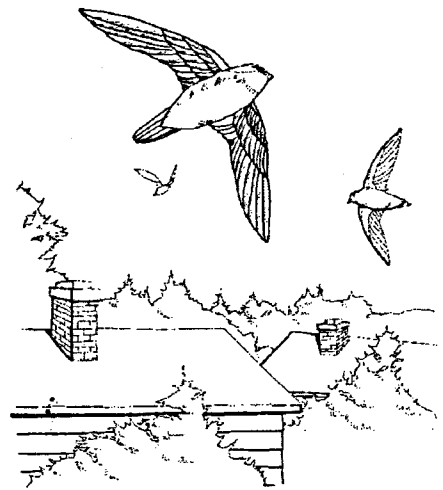
Wednesday, September 9, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Membership Meeting, Program to be announced

Wednesday, October 7, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Membership Meeting, Program to be announced

Wednesday, November 11, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Membership Meeting, Program to be announced

Wednesday, December 9, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Members Night... Bring your slides to share

Wednesday, January 13, 1999, 6:30 PM, Forest Park Nature Center
Members Potluck... Bring a table service and a dish to share



Midewin... Continued from Page 1

With over 20,000 acres of diverse habitat, Midewin cannot be comprehensively covered in half a day. The site contains wooded tracts, high quality streams, and wetlands in addition to grassland areas. Wetlands on the site provide habitat for breeding Sora, and Virginia and King Rails have been sighted. In winter, the area is an important habitat for raptors and includes large numbers of Rough-Legged Hawks and a roost of Long-Eared Owls.

Including travel to and from Midewin and a brief detour to visit several of Maury and Emiko's restoration projects, 58 bird species were found. In a fitting conclusion to the trip, another grassland species of concern, a Northern Harrier, was observed hunting and fending off a dive-bombing American Kestrel in Marshall County.

The Bird's Eye View is published bimonthly by Peoria Audubon.

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Deadline for submissions to next issue: August 15.

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1998 Spring Bird Count and Birdathon Results

Species	Birdathon	Mason	Peoria	Fulton	Species	Birdathon	Mason	Peoria	Fulton
Common Loon					Western Sandpiper				
Pied-billed Grebe	***	1		18	Pectoral Sandpiper		1		
Double-crested Cormorant	***	281	13	17	Dunlin				
American Bittern		1			Short-billed Dowitcher				
Great Blue Heron	***	94	18	86	Common Snipe				
Great Egret	***	5	2	13	American Woodcock		2		
Little Blue Heron					Wilson's Phalarope				
Cattle Egret	***	1	5	6	Bonaparte's Gull		1		
Green-backed Heron	***	4	3	6	Ring-billed Gull	***	184	218	133
Black-crowned Night Heron					Herring Gull		2		
Yellow-crowned Night Heron					Caspian Tern				
Mute Swan				2	Common Tern				
Canada Goose	***	82	149	471	Forster's Tern		2		
Wood Duck	***	30	3	28	Black Tern		1		
Green-winged Teal	***				Rock Dove	***	12	66	27
American Black Duck					Mourning Dove	***	86	128	149
Mallard	***	30	76	40	Black-billed Cuckoo				
Northern Pintail					Yellow-billed Cuckoo		5		3
Blue-winged Teal	***	8	12	14	Eastern Screech Owl		2	1	
Northern Shoveler				10	Great Horned Owl		4	1	3
Gadwall	***			2	Barred Owl	***	3	2	
American Wigeon					Common Nighthawk		4	6	1
Redhead				2	Chuck-will's-widow		1		
Ring-necked Duck					Whip-poor-will		20		5
Lesser Scaup				2	Chimney swift	***	51	98	102
Bufflehead					Ruby-throated Hummingbird		3	3	7
Hooded Merganser				1	Belted Kingfisher	***	1	1	2
Red Breasted Merganser				1	Red-headed Woodpecker	***	62	13	63
Ruddy Duck					Red-bellied Woodpecker	***	38	27	24
Turkey Vulture	***	23	20	59	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				1
Osprey					Downy Woodpecker	***	29	13	19
Northern Harrier				1	Hairy Woodpecker	***	5	2	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2			Northern Flicker	***	41	30	26
Cooper's Hawk		1	2		Pileated Woodpecker	***	5		1
Red-shouldered Hawk					Olive-sided Flycatcher				
Broad-winged Hawk			1		Eastern Wood-Pewee		6		3
Red-tailed Hawk	***	11	10	13	Acadian Flycatcher				
American Kestrel		2	13	7	Willow Flycatcher				
Ring-necked Pheasant		35	3	2	Least Flycatcher		6	7	
Wild Turkey		16		4	Eastern Phoebe	***	5	18	34
Northern Bobwhite	***	27	7	32	Great-crested Flycatcher		35	14	10
King Rail					Eastern Kingbird	***	18	19	47
Virginia Rail					Horned Lark	***	24	14	30
Sora					Purple Martin	***	20	42	46
Common Moorhen					Tree Swallow	***	191	70	27
American Coot	***	48	54	87	No. Rough-winged Swallow	***	15	24	32
Black-bellied Plover			1		Bank Swallow		4	12	9
Lesser Golden Plover					Cliff Swallow		2		1
Semipalmated Plover		2		2	Barn Swallow	***	150	64	108
Killdeer	***	36	29	48	Blue Jay	***	189	145	120
Greater Yellowlegs					American Crow	***	74	69	78
Lesser Yellowlegs	***	4		2	Black-capped Chickadee	***	29	41	21
Solitary Sandpiper			6	1	Carolina Chickadee				
Spotted Sandpiper		5	1		Tufted Titmouse	***	43	31	24
Upland Sandpiper				6	Red-breasted Nuthatch	***	4	1	
Semipalmated Sandpiper					White-breasted Nuthatch	***	10	10	12
Least Sandpiper				2	Brown Creeper				1
White-rumped Sandpiper					Carolina Wren	***	12	7	8

White Pelican

1998 Spring Bird Count and Birdathon Results

Species	Birdathon	Mason	Peoria	Fulton
House Wren	***	77	37	75
Sedge Wren				
Marsh Wren				
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	***		5	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	***	5	20	4
Eastern Bluebird	***	33	15	62
Veery		4		
Gray-cheeked Thrush		5		
Swainson's Thrush		4	6	
Hermit Thrush			1	
Wood Thrush		28	8	7
American Robin	***	315	466	348
Gray Catbird		46	19	31
Northern Mockingbird		6	2	11
Brown Thrasher	***	54	14	38
Water Pipit				
Cedar Waxwing	***	2	9	4
Loggerhead Shrike				
European Starling	***	316	588	
White-eyed Vireo				1
Bell's Vireo				
Solitary Vireo		1		
Yellow-throated Vireo		2	7	2
Warbling Vireo	***	21	19	37
Philadelphia Vireo		2		
Red-eyed Vireo	***	13	10	5
Blue-winged Warbler		3	1	
Golden-winged Warbler		2	4	
Tennessee Warbler	***	32	30	
Orange-crowned Warbler		1		
Nashville Warbler	***	48	22	
Northern Parula	***	12	4	2
Yellow Warbler	***	11	8	17
Chestnut-sided Warbler		4	2	
Magnolia Warbler				
Cape May Warbler		1		
Black-throated Blue Warbler				
Yellow-rumped Warbler	***	119	25	7
Black-throated Green Warbler	***	21	4	
Blackburnian Warbler		2		2
Yellow-throated Warbler	***	2	2	
Pine Warbler			4	
Prairie Warbler				
Palm Warbler	***	26	24	
Bay-breasted Warbler		1		
Blackpoll Warbler		2	6	
Cerulean Warbler				
Black-and-white Warbler		4	8	
American Redstart		20	5	2
Prothonotary Warbler	***	17	3	2
Worm-eating Warbler			2	
Ovenbird		18	5	
Northern Waterthrush		5	1	1
Louisiana Waterthrush	***		6	
Kentucky Warbler		3		
Mourning Warbler				
Common Yellowthroat	***	39	17	75
Hooded Warbler				

Species	Birdathon	Mason	Peoria	Fulton
Wilson's Warbler				
Canada Warbler				
Yellow-breasted Chat		1	2	1
Summer Tanager				2
Scarlet Tanager	***	18	2	2
Northern Cardinal	***	104	124	107
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	***	137	11	57
Blue Grosbeak				
Indigo Bunting		40	16	55
Dickcissel		67		3
Eastern Towhee	***	73	7	18
Chipping Sparrow	***	73	48	59
Field Sparrow	***	60	11	37
Clay-colored Sparrow				1
Vesper Sparrow		4		1
Lark Sparrow		36		2
Savannah Sparrow	***	1	3	1
Grasshopper Sparrow		42	1	3
Song Sparrow	***	36	87	62
Lincoln's Sparrow		1		
Swamp Sparrow	***		3	1
White-throated Sparrow	***	155	213	7
White-crowned Sparrow	***	36	76	48
Bobolink		1		3
Red-winged Blackbird	***	893	998	498
Eastern Meadowlark	***	48	28	79
Western Meadowlark				13
Yellow-headed Blackbird				1
Common Grackle	***	434	596	218
Brown-headed Cowbird	***	116	82	70
Orchard Oriole		4	4	4
Northern Oriole	***	118	39	103
Purple Finch		2		
House Finch	***	19	71	13
Pine Siskin				
American Goldfinch	***	117	154	158
House Sparrow	***	190	574	541
Eurasian Tree Sparrow		38		30

DOCUMENTED SPECIES

Rusty Blackbird			1	
Bald Eagle		2		
American Tree Sparrow				1

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SEEN	6337	6184	5094	
TOTAL SPECIES SEEN	84	138	114	119

Count Notes

The Birdathon took place on Saturday, May 2 and consisted of Peoria County. The Spring Count Date was Saturday, May 9. It was a very unusual spring migration. Several species were not present during the count. Shore birds and Warblers were particularly low.