

# Bird's-Eye View



Conserving bird habitat  
for over  
**75 years**

February  
2010

Mark your calendars!  
IL RIVER BIRDING TOUR  
SAT., MARCH 6, 2010

Newsletter of The Peoria Audubon Society... Chapter of National Audubon since 1981

Chapter of The Peoria Academy of Science since 1930

[www.peoriaaudubon.org](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org)

Contact the Peoria Audubon Society at [audubon@peoriaaudubon.org](mailto:audubon@peoriaaudubon.org)

## AUDUBON CALENDAR

Peoria Audubon meets at 7:00 PM on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May at the Forest Park Nature Center (FPNC). It's a relaxed, friendly evening with an interesting presentation followed by refreshments. Free and open to the public.

These are just a few of the upcoming events listed at

[www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar)  
Wed., Feb. 10, 2010, 7 PM FPNC

### The Joy & Practice of Bird Feeding

Monthly Membership Meeting. Jim Parrot celebrating the 10th anniversary as the owner of the Peoria franchise for Wild Birds Unlimited, will cover how to attract target birds. Jim will discuss new developments in bird feeding and answer your questions.

Feb. 12 - 15, 2010

### Great Backyard Bird Count

The Annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy and it helps the birds.

More information at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site: <http://birdsource.org/gbbc>

Tue., Feb. 16, 2010, 6:30PM

### Owl Prowl at Camp Wokanda

Meet a Forest Park Naturalist at the lower parking lot of Camp Wokanda for a walk into what has been great owling territory. For directions and more information, call 686-3360. Age: 5 & up. Fee: \$2 per person (\$1/CORE members) Sponsored by Peoria Park District

Sat., March 6, 2010 7 AM - 4 PM

### Birding Tour of the Illinois River

John Mullen and Maury Brucker host our spring birding trip along the Illinois River. The tour highlights the spring migration along the Illinois River. Transportation and catered lunch provided. Pre-registration is required. Call 309-686-3360 to register. Fee: \$30 members, \$35 non-members.

Wed., Mar. 10, 2010 7 PM

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge Monthly Membership Meeting. Lee Albright, Refuge Manager will speak on the 6200 acre refuge that has been designated as a Globally Important Bird Area and a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site.

FPNC = Forest Park Nature Center,  
5809 N. Forest Park Drive, Peoria Heights

Contact the Peoria Audubon Society at [audubon@peoriaaudubon.org](mailto:audubon@peoriaaudubon.org)

## A Note from our President Electronic Field Guides

### - New & Improved by Dennis Endicott

According to my friends and relatives, I've always been "associated" with a love of gadgets. Recently, there has been an explosion of new gadgets and electronic resources for birding.

In the early 80's, when personal computers were starting to become mainstream, the term "killer application" or "killer app" was coined to characterize a software application so phenomenal that it would cause people to go out and buy their first computer. And, in the past 2 years or so, a number of "killer" birding applications have been developed for portable electronic devices. For birders, the landscape of reference options appears to be starting to change. For me personally, the killer birding app was iBird. But in the past few months, a number of additional apps have also come on the market. Whether they are "killer apps" or not, is yet to be determined.

iBird ([www.ibird.com](http://www.ibird.com)) is an electronic birding field guide application that runs on the iPhone or iPod Touch. But iBird is not the only electronic field guide. In the past few months, The Audubon Society, National Geographic Society, and a few other organizations have also released electronic field guides. [You can try the Audubon Field Guides for free without buying an iPod - Instructions on this later.]

So, what can an electronic field guide do? With iBird running on my iPod Touch, not only do I have the usual content of a conventional field guide: photos, drawings, descriptions, range etc., but I also have recordings of the bird songs and can do electronic searches. The searches can be for a wide range of features from basic (size, range, color, etc.) to the very specialized (color patterns, head characteristics, song, song pattern, and more). As an example, the iBird list of small and very small birds "typically found", in Illinois, in January, returns 133 bird species.

continued on page 2

# **MARK YOUR CALENDARS WITH THESE BIRD-RELATED EVENTS:**

## **Aerial Inventories of Waterfowl**

**Saturday, February 20, 2010, 10AM**

Aaron Yetter, waterfowl ecologist at the prestigious Forbes Biological Station near Havana, will discuss aerial inventories of waterfowl at the Dickson Mounds Museum. According to information provided by the Forbes Station; iAerial inventories of waterfowl abundance, species composition, and distribution have been conducted throughout Illinois during fall, winter, and spring migrations since 1948. The massive amount of data provided has vastly improved our understanding of the chronology of migration, the effects of refuges, the value of wetlands, and the distribution of waterfowl in Illinois.<sup>i</sup> The presentation is sponsored by the Emiquon Corps of Discovery.

## **Tom Ulrich, Nature Photographer**

**Tuesday, March 2, 2010, 7:00 p.m.**

Tom Ulrich comes to Forest Park Nature Center in central Illinois with breathtaking photographs of nature from around the globe! Each year, Tom Ulrich dazzles his audiences with amazing photographs and humorous narration. He will take us on a photographic journey of the year 2009 in the life of a wildlife photographer. This year's focus will include wildlife from the Pantanal of Brazil and all of North America, with a special feature of the hummingbirds of Ecuador. His narration includes insight on photo technique and animal behavior and is always riddled with humor. Mr. Ulrich is a renowned nature photographer whose work has been featured in National Geographic, National Wildlife, Time, and many other publications. Tom has published several books, field guides, and calendars. Originally from Illinois, he now resides outside of Glacier National Park in Montana.

Fee: Members of Forest Park Nature Center \$5/adult, \$3/children under 12; non-members \$7/adult, \$4/children under 12.

## **Digital Photo Workshop with Tom Ulrich**

**Wednesday, March 3, 2010, 9AM - 1 PM**

Not to be missed! Get the most out of your digital photography by learning from a master. Details pending but you can be sure this will provide excellent techniques and style in an enjoyable format. Call John Mullen at 686-3360 for details. Pre-Registration required. Fee: \$35/person.

## **Birding Tour of the Illinois River**

**Saturday, March 6, 2010 7am - 4pm**

This trip will take in some of the bird migration hotspots along the Illinois River, spots renowned for both scenic quality and bird diversity. After meeting at the Nature Center, we will travel south along the east shore of the river stopping at Spring Lake and Chautauqua, have a catered lunch overlooking the Dickson Mounds complex, then proceed to one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the world, the Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve. From there on to Rice Lake and Banner Marsh. Trip leaders: Maury Brucker and John Mullen of Peoria Audubon Society. Pre-registration a must. Call 686-3360 for more info and registration.

Age: 14 & up Fee: \$35, Nature Center and Peoria Audubon members: \$30

## **Build a Recycled Birdhouse**

**Saturday, April 3, 2010 2-3pm**

Get ready for spring! Create and decorate your own birdhouse using recycled materials. Be prepared to have fun and get a little messy. Forest Park Nature Center, Pre-registration required, call 686-3360. Age 5-10. Fee: \$6 per person/\$1 discount for members.



Long-time Peoria Audubon member, Ralph Scott passed away in July 2009. Ralph was a reliable volunteer on the Christmas Bird counts, along with his wife Sharon.

In memorial, we thank Scott for his dedicated participation in Peoria Audubon. We send our deepest condolences to his wife Sharon.



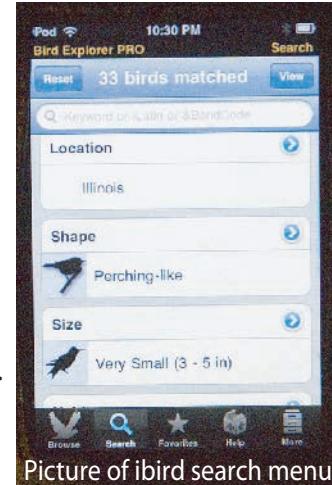
## **....Electronic Field guides continued from page 1....**

species. Checking the "Habitat" to "Lakes, Rivers & Ponds" reduces the number to 40 species (down from the 924 species listed in North America). Checking the "Shape" to Duck-like reduces the number to 25 species. Then, touching "View" will bring up the information on each individual species within the selection. If interested in photos of the birds, you can touch "Photo" then go sequentially through the images of each species. This, of course, may be how one browses through a conventional field guide, but other sorting and viewing options are equally easy.

One of the features I especially like is having the iBird list and show similar birds. Recently, I have been struggling to better identify birds by their call or song. After listening to the song of a bird, I can touch "Similar" and the app will bring up a list of similar bird songs. During the Christmas Bird Count, I listened to a Pileated Woodpecker out in the woods by the river. Checking with my iBird, after listening to the call, I touched "Similar" and it brought up the similar call of the Northern Flicker. This helped us confirm that it was indeed a Pileated Woodpecker and not the flicker that we listened to.

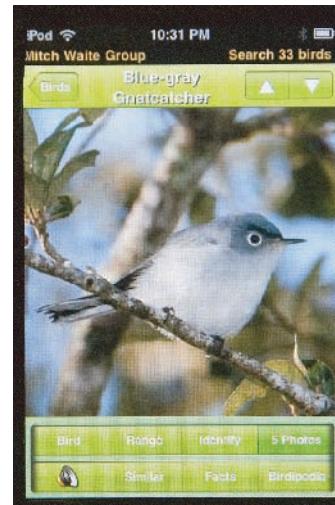
OK, what if I can't afford an iPod?

The iBird app was one of the first well known electronic birding guides. In the past few months, the National Audubon Society has created their versions of electronic field guides. In fact, 10 free Audubon electronic field guides are online. In addition to Birds, Audubon also has field guides for Mammals, Butterflies, Reptiles & Amphibians, Fishes, Trees and 4 other categories. Here is the good part: with a free registration at [www.audubonguides.com](http://www.audubonguides.com), the entire field guide, including searches, is free to use on the Internet. Of course, they advertise that the application is available for download onto your personal electronic device at iTunes. But for now at least, the entire application in each of the 10 field guides is there for you to try out and use free.



Picture of ibird search menu

In addition to the electronic Audubon Guides, one of the best free Internet resources is to go to [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org). This site was conceived and is maintained by the Cornell College of Ornithology. And, no registration is needed. In particular, when viewing birds, one can make a side-by-side photo comparison of similar birds (located at the bottom of the birding pages). This site not only has the traditional field guide content and bird calls, but also contains a great amount of birding basics training resources. These provide guidance and suggestions for the novice and skilled alike. There is even a section of training videos (useful for the novice, entertaining refreshers for the experienced). Well worth a visit.



All the internet links mentioned above, as well as other resources, are linked at our website: [www.peoriaaudubon.org/links](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/links).

## **SNOW BUNTINGS**

by Maury Brucker

Snow Buntings are sparrow-sized birds with mostly black and white coloring. Tan-brown markings are part of the winter plumage. Peoria is in the bunting's winter range; however, most people living here have not noticed these interesting birds. You have to know what to look for and because the winter flocks are nomadic, you have to keep looking to see them.

As to where to look in the Peoria area, the buntings are usually seen on the ground in very open areas with very little cover where you would not expect to see any birds. I often see the birds arrive with a snow storm. There could be a few buntings with the small flocks of Prairie Horned Larks or they could be in huge loose flocks of thousands flying over. After a deep snowfall which covers the fields where they usually forage, they come to the sides of roads. My favorite place to see them is along gravel roads in the grassy strips scraped off by the snow plows. They can also occur on more heavily traveled highways, but they usually show up in the morning with less traffic. The flocks usually flush from the roadsides as a car passes. To see them better, you must pull over and stop before they flush and then slowly pull forward and stop again without flushing them.

Lapland Longspurs have similar feeding behavior to Snow Buntings and they sometimes occur together or sometimes in single species flocks during the winter in our area. The longspurs are brownish with more streaking on their sides. The longspurs more likely occur with horned larks which can be pickout when the larger larks flush they show a larger, longer black tails.

Before this year, I thought Snow Bunting's behavior was limited to feeding on the ground. This winter I have seen some strange differences in this grounded behavior. I have seen snow buntings, sitting on hills of corn, stored at grain elevators, which is similar to their typical behavior. However, I was surprised to see some buntings going to the cone shaped top of a round steel storage bins. My only explanation is that the grain spreaders in the top of the bins had flipped small pieces of corn, out on the roof, which is attracting the buntings. How about the behavior of sitting on power lines? I saw this too after hearing reports of it from other birders. Sitting on bushes and a top farm fences was another variation of behavior that I observed this winter, deviating from the norm.

So, when the snows arrive and cover the fields, start looking for Snow Buntings. These birds are a fascinating part of our winter scene's here. But, remember to watch the traffic when you are looking for them.

## **SHOREBIRD SANCTUARY**

by Deb Roe

The Peoria Audubon Society has, for a long time, been working on goal of preserving or restoring shorebird habitat that is lacking in the area. On Feb. 9th, Peoria Audubon's Sanctuary committee met with Wildlife Prairie Park executive Director, Jeff Rosecrans, and other key personnel from the Park, IDNR, and NRCS to review a concept plan that Audubon had prepared for a site on Wildlife Prairie Park Property. The concept plan met with all the project partners' approval. The project is moving forward with some feasibility work, including researching grant opportunities, scoping permits, and other items necessary before any restoration work can begin. The project will be contingent upon grant acquisition and fund raising. Look for updates in future newsletters, as the sanctuary project progresses.

**Savannah Sparrow at MSD**  
photo by Dennis Endicott



## **SPRING MSD FIELD TRIP**

Thad Edmunds will be hosting Peoria Audubon's biannual field trip to the MSD property in Canton. Exact date has not been finalized, expected to be a Saturday in April. The final date will be posted on the website soon. Contact Thad Edmunds at 309-243-1854 to sign up or for more information. Pre-registration is required.



**Snow Bunting**  
photo by Donna Dewhurst

## **December Meeting Recap**

by Deb Roe

At our monthly meeting, December 7, 2009, Joyce Hoffman with the Illinois Natural History Survey, gave an informative presentation on the Bats of Illinois.

Ms. Hoffman described the twelve bat species in Illinois. She provided great information, photographs and a specimen display. The presentation included information on habits, diet, hibernation and migration. Some bats hibernate, some bats migrate and some bats do a combination of both. She spoke briefly about white nose syndrome, a fungus having a detrimental effect on hibernating bat colonies. Handouts that Joyce provided at the meeting are available for viewing on our website: [www.peoriaaudubon.org](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org)

Joyce Hoffman is also the author of the Field Mammals of Illinois, an excellent field guide available at the Forest Park Nature Center. She graciously signed copies of her book for Audubon members, after the presentation.



**Indiana Bat**  
photo courtesy of USFWS

## **2009 BIRD SEED SALE RECAP**

by Joe Van Wassenhove



Thanks to all those who made the 2009 Bird Seed Sale a big success! Our annual sale, generously supported by Kelly Seed & Hardware in Peoria, benefits both the Peoria Audubon Society and the Friends of the Rock Island Trail. This year's sale generated an all time high of just over \$4000 in orders for bird seed. Don't feel bad if you missed last year's sale -- mark your calendar for the 2010 bird seed sale this coming October. Thanks to our loyal customers!

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY**

by Dennis Endicott et al.

Peoria Audubon participated in the 110th Annual Christmas Bird Count, the longest-running wildlife census in the world. The data Peoria citizen science volunteers collect is compiled with national data and trends are observed and reported. This year Peoria and Chillicothe reported the following summary:

	Peoria	Chillicothe	Total
<b>Date:</b>	Dec. 19, 2009	Jan. 2, 2010	
<b>Total Species</b>	67	62	77
<b>Total Individual Birds</b>	10574	7014	17588
<b>Total Hours</b>	57	55	112
<b>Owling Hours</b>	1.2	0	1.2
<b>Car Hours</b>	39	38.25	77.25
<b>Car Miles</b>	394.4	372	766.4
<b>Foot Hours</b>	18.5	16.75	35.25
<b>Foot Miles</b>	20.25	11.6	31.85
<b>Participants</b>	17	13	30

The detailed count data are posted on the website: [www.peoriaaudubon.org](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org) for viewing.



**Barrow's Goldeneye**  
photo courtesy of USFWS

Interesting species noted on the Christmas count included Cackling Goose, White Fronted Goose and a Barrow's Goldeneye that needed special documentation. None of the Brants that had previously been spotted in the area, were seen during the Christmas Bird Count.



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## Inside:

**Peoria Audubon Board**  
[audubon@peoriaaudubon.org](mailto:audubon@peoriaaudubon.org)

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## SNOW BUNTINGS

When does your annual membership expire?

Check the  
date on your  
mailing label



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## Conservation

### BANNER YEAR FOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

It was a historic year for federal funding of Audubon conservation priorities, alleviating years of underfunding that starved conservation budgets.

- The Stimulus package passed by Congress earlier this year contained billions of dollars for green jobs, energy efficiency programs, improvements to National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks, and ecosystem restoration projects.
- The Interior appropriations bill increased funding in several important areas, including \$503 million for operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System, up from \$463 million in FY 2009, and \$31.03 million for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Management, up \$1.5 million from the FY 2009 appropriations.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund included a number of state and chapter priorities, including Audubon Connecticut - Steward B. McKinney NWR - \$2,000,000; Houston Audubon - San Bernard NWR - \$1,250,000; Evansville Audubon - Pakota River NWR - \$1,150,000; Central New Mexico Audubon - Sevilleta NWR - \$500,000; and Audubon South Carolina - Waccamaw NWR - \$600,000.
- Our Coastal Louisiana work got a boost when the White House Council on Environmental Quality announced it was creating a new federal interagency task force to coordinate the "economic and environmental resiliency" of Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf Coast region. This was a great shot in the arm for restoration of critically important Louisiana Coastal wetlands.
- Funding for the study of restoration projects in Coastal Louisiana has tripled, going from just about \$8 million in the FY 2009 bill to over \$24 million for 2010. It is our goal to move this money from "study money" to actual project construction money in FY 2011.
- Long Island Sound restoration funds got a much needed increase in funding — \$7 million in FY 2010, up from \$3 million in FY 2009.
- The complex array of Everglades projects and funding enjoyed huge increases overall, with millions more going to projects designed to restore the natural water flows that make the Everglades a special place for birds and wildlife.



**Birdwatcher at National Wildlife Refuge**  
photo courtesy of USFWS

Article courtesy of Audubon Advisory  
sign up for Audubon Advisory and e-alerts online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)