

Bird's-eye View



Conserving
bird habitat
for over
75
Years

JULY 2010

Mark your calendars!
ILLINOIS RIVER BIRDING TOUR
SAT., AUGUST 14, 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

Contact the Peoria Audubon Society at 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

Sat., Aug. 14, 2010, 7 AM - 4 PM

BIRDING TOUR OF THE ILLINOIS RIVER

Catch the peak of shorebird migration with this field trip led by Maury Brucker, of Peoria Audubon Society, and Mike Miller, of Forest Park Nature Center. Trip includes transportation in a Park District, 15-passenger van and a catered lunch. Pre-registration required. Register early as this trip fills up fast. Best for 12 and up. Forest Park Nature Center and/or Peoria Audubon Members receive a \$5 discount. Call Peoria Park District at 686-3360 for more info and registration. Fee: \$35.

Sat., Aug. 21, 2010, 9 AM - Noon

Hummingbird Festival at FPNC

Vernon Kleen from Springfield (one of the two licensed hummingbird banders in Illinois) will demonstrate hummingbird banding and discuss the fascinating world of hummingbirds. You will have a chance to feel the heartbeat of a hummingbird and "adopt" one of these beautiful flyers. This free event is a come-as-you-please activity. Jointly sponsored by Forest Park Nature Center and Illinois Audubon. Fee: FREE, donations greatly appreciated.



Wed., Sept. 8, 2010, 7:00 PM

Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Kristan McKinsey, VP of Collections and Exhibits, Lakeview Museum in Peoria, will present an illustrated lecture on John James Audubon: American Artist and Naturalist. The exhibition will be featured at Lakeview Museum from Sept. 18, 2010 through Jan. 9, 2011.

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

Fri., Sept. 17, 2010, 2:30 - 5 PM
River Awareness Cruise

Peoria Lakes Basin Alliance sponsors this cruise for interested people to view progress of the island project, find out what's next, hear from the Corps of Engineers and others on the state of the lakes and learn what local groups and organizations are doing and how you can help. Register for the cruise online at:

www.heartlandwaterresources.com/cruise.html
Cost is \$50 and includes complimentary dinner pass at that evening's Oktoberfest.

Sat., Sept. 18, 2010
Illinois River Sweep

Friends of the Illinois River sponsors this annual event that cleans up the Illinois River and its tributaries. All registered participants receive a free River Sweep T-shirt, plus gloves and trash bags. To join Call: 1-800-659-4659 or to register online: www.friendsoftheillinoisriver.org



Sun., Oct. 10, 2010, 2 - 4 PM

Guided Tour of John James Audubon Exhibit at Lakeview Museum

A special opportunity for members of Peoria Audubon and The Nature Conservancy for personalized and guided tour of the exhibit of art and artifacts from John James Audubon at Lakeview Museum, more details inside this newsletter.

Wed., Oct. 13, 2010, 7:00 PM

Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Program to be Announced. Check the website: www.peoriaaudubon.org for updates.

Wed., Nov. 10, 2010, 7:00 PM

Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Angelo Capparella, Curator of Birds for the John Wesley Powell-Dale Birkenholz Natural History Collections in the School of Biological Sciences at Illinois State University, will be presenting "Bird Collections in the 21st Century: Past and Future Value."

Wed., Dec., 8, 2010, 7:00 PM

Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Program to be announced. Check the website or future newsletter for updates.

A Note from our President

Audubon Response to Oil Spill

by Dennis Endicott

The good news is that the cap seems to finally have stopped new oil leaking into the gulf. The bad news is that the massive oil spill is continuing to cause problems. One of the next big concerns will be with the arctic-breeding birds that migrate to or through the gulf.



Starting in July, tens of millions of shorebirds, waterfowl and other migratory birds will make their way to the Gulf for a rest stop and to feed as they are en route to destinations further south or to the Gulf area itself. According to Frank Gill, Audubon President, "The Gulf of Mexico is like Grand Central Station for the birds of the Eastern United States and especially the Mississippi Flyway."

Ocean birds, shorebirds, waterbirds and waterfowl that rely on saltwater habitat are at highest risk from the oil spill. Not only are the birds at risk from problems associated with getting their feathers coated in oil, but the birds may ingest oil they encounter when they feed. For instance, shorebirds will feed on mudflats that may be contaminated. The extent of the risks are not yet known.

Even the waterfowl that we find in Central Illinois, such as mallards and snow geese, may be at risk as they arrive in the Gulf in November and December. Not only is the habitat crucial for the birds that live there year-round, but millions of others will pass through there this fall and winter.

What can be done? "One of the most important things we can do is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the spill's impacts on birds and their habitat to form the foundation for full recovery plans," according to Greg Butcher, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon.

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In addition to directly aiding in bird rescue operations, Audubon is training and deploying volunteers throughout the Gulf states to monitor bird populations and habitat conditions. This will be an ongoing effort that continues into the Christmas Bird Counts.

One of the initiatives to channel the energies of a force of volunteers that desire to help birds, wildlife and mitigate the harmful effects of the oil spill was to create a National Oil Spill Volunteer Response Center. To date, more than 17,000 volunteers are now in the National Audubon Database to assist on a number of fronts

"People just want to do something to help.... Volunteers with the right skills and a positive attitude can make a world of difference by being available when and where they're needed," according to Audubon's National Field Director Sean Savill.

Areas where volunteers are needed include:

- Coastal Bird Survey – collecting data and photos on bird resources and impacts
- Wildlife Transport Facilitators – assist USFWS and Tri-State Bird Rescue; working round-the-clock shifts in key locations
- Bird Capture and Rescue Materials – volunteers are needed to make nets, cages and other material to assist trained professionals in oiled bird rescue efforts.
- Citizen Science Monitoring – submitting electronic information on bird sightings at Gulf Important Bird Areas, refuges or sanctuaries to assess population impacts
- Bird Hotline Operators – provide on-site bird expertise for Volunteer Response Center

How can you help? Audubon's Volunteer Response Center is located at 6016 Highway 63 in Moss Point, MS. Interested volunteers may register online or make donations online at:

["http://www.audubonaction.org/site/PageServer?pagename=aa_HowtoHelp"](http://www.audubonaction.org/site/PageServer?pagename=aa_HowtoHelp)

Other conservation organizations are helping too. For instance: The American Birding Association set up an Oil Response Donation Line at: ["https://www.aba.org/donate/gulf.php"](https://www.aba.org/donate/gulf.php)

The ABA is helping by documenting the effects on specific bird populations as well as providing bird recovery assistance. Additionally, the ABA assists by offering their voice and resources of their large membership base to assist in the effort.

Ebird.org provides a Gulf Coast Oil Spill Bird Tracker at: ["http://ebird.org/tools/oilspill/"](http://ebird.org/tools/oilspill/)

Ebird claims "This information can effectively steer beach protection and clean-up efforts to the sites with the greatest concentrations of birds and most important habitats. From this site, you can view sighting distribution maps from 10 prominent gulf species. This is where birders have logged onto ebird to share their sightings. The site has overlay tools to show where the oil slick is presently as well as where it is forecast. The information will be used to determine large trends.

With the unprecedented catastrophe in the Gulf, National Audubon set up a portal for online donations from their homepage:

["http://www.audubon.org"](http://www.audubon.org) www.audubon.org



**John James Audubon:
American Artist & Naturalist.
Lakeview Museum
Sept. 17, 2010 - Jan. 9, 2011**

**Special Viewing Date
for Audubon Members:
Oct. 10, 2010, 2-4 PM**

John James Audubon's art and aesthetic legacy continue to amaze and inspire. His visionary and prophetic concerns for the environment continue to speak to new generations in America and the world today. His

masterpiece, "The Birds of America", and his written journals stand as an unsurpassed contribution to the worlds of fine art, natural science, American history and literature.

The exhibit touches on the disciplines of art, history, biology, natural science, literature, and environmental studies.

The Illinois State Museum has agreed to lend mounted specimens of birds from their extensive collection to complement this exhibit.

There is a special opportunity for members of Peoria Audubon and The Nature Conservancy in Illinois on Sunday, October 10 from 2-4 pm. A personalized and guided tour of the exhibit of art and artifacts from John James Audubon at Lakeview Museum will be offered to members of both organizations. This exhibition presents a selection of extremely rare and valuable Audubon works of art and artifacts, as well as original Audubon letters, rare books, photographs, personal items, and sixty of the original large hand-colored Double Elephant Folio engravings from The Birds of America, selected from the collection and archives of the John James Audubon Museum at Henderson, Kentucky. Kristan McKinsey, VP of Collections and Exhibitions at Lakeview, will provide insights into these rare and valuable works of art created by Audubon.

Furthermore, a special, related presentation and lecture will be offered and provided by Jeff Walk, Ph.D. Dr. Walk is uniquely qualified to be the featured speaker for this collaborative event; he is the Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy, plus he serves on the Board of Directors for Illinois Audubon, is an avid birder and a resident of Central Illinois. He will present "A Century of Change: Landscape & Bird Populations in Illinois". He will discuss the amazing conclusions from repeating the oldest bird survey in North America and the changes that were discovered, some of which were for the better and some for the worse. Catered refreshments will be served.

Invitations will be mailed to current members of both organizations in September. If you, or someone you know, would like to be included; please contact Tessa Rayment at 312-580-2357. Advance reservations are required, and a modest fee to cover expenses is requested. Please join us!





Early in June, 2006, I heard about a family of Barn Owls living in the rafters over Jim Johnston's Small Engine repair shop in Sessor, Illinois. The story goes that the Barn Owls roosted and raised their young in the rafters of an old decommissioned church made into a small engine repair shop. When necessary, they deposited pellets on or near Jim as he worked. After coming out at dusk, they perched on the nearby lamp post or flew into the trees in the park across the road. Within a week of hearing about the owls, I made motel reservations. I helped my 87-year-old mother into my pickup truck and we hit the road for Franklin County and the Sessor Barn Owls. We got there early in the afternoon, so we birded Rend Lake until late afternoon and then headed for

Sessor. I only had general information so I stopped at the Library to get better directions to Jim's repair shop. With help, we found it. But again, we were disappointed with what we found. The old church was gone, and a new building had been built next to the alley, but with no Barn Owl access porch. I knocked on the door of the house next door and a man that identified himself as Jim came out to talk to us. He was the man that rented the space from the church for his repair shop. A huge storm had come through during the month of March, 2006, and the roof failed and collapsed. In April the city council condemned the building and it was torn down a week later. (You gotta love small town bureaucracy.) By the time I got there in June, a smaller repair shop had been built and the Church had been dedicated with a stone marker, and the owls had not been seen since. TRE - 0 Nemesis - 1

The magazine "Outdoor Illinois" January 2007 issue highlighted an article on Illinois' Endangered and Threatened Species. The article gave great accounts of the status of salamanders, turtles, snakes, birds, plants, bats, insects, butterflies, fish, and you guessed it, the Barn Owl. I learned a little more. TRE - 0 Nemesis - 2

The Barn Owl was on the cover of "Birders Digest" (There's That Darn Bird again). TRE - 0 Nemesis - 3

Just prior to going on another March Greater Prairie Chicken trip with Vern Kleen, I got an email indicating that a Barn Owl had a nest at the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area Headquarters. That evening, when we got to the headquarters, Bob Shelby gave me the bad news. The Barn Owl had been killed, the nest destroyed, probably by a Great Horned Owl. No Prairie Ridge State Natural Area Barn Owls. TRE - 0 Nemesis - 4

In May of 2007, Jan and I went to Southeastern Arizona for a week of birding. The guide books gave two locations for Barn Owls that were within driving distance. We tried them both. No Barn Owls. We were informed later that Barn Owls hadn't been seen at those locations for a year, but were being seen regularly at a location that would not fit into our agenda.

Perseverance always wins sooner or later. Late in June 2007 I received a tip that a family of owls was living in the cavity of a tree located on a vacant lot next to a funeral home. A few days later, I made motel reservations and helped my 88-year-old mother in my pickup truck and we hit the road toward Breese, IL. Our instructions were to park on the street, south of the vacant lot. We did. About dusk, begin playing a Barn Owl tape (a spine-tingling "scr-r-e-e-e-ech"). We did. It wasn't five minutes and the guys from the funeral home came out and proclaimed with enthusiasm "Great! They are back!" But they weren't. I had to tell them it was my tape. We all were disappointed. Mom and I did everything we could think of. We sat in the truck, drove the streets, talked to more neighbors until after dark - nothing. All comments were consistent... nothing for at least a month. The owls were not there. Several weeks later I would find out that the whole family of Barn Owls had been killed over a period of a few days. It all happened because the owls were trying to hunt in the median between the East and West lanes of Route 50 just outside of Breese, IL. TRE - 0 Nemesis - 6

January is a great month for owls as they call, mate, build nests, and, well, you what else. Travis Mahan and Dan Kasselbaum led an IOS-sponsored Owl Prowl near Carlyle Lake in January, 2008. I went there to learn from these two experts; Great Horned Owls, Screech, Barred, Short Eared, Long Eared, and Saw-Whets. Owling til midnight to hear 'em and an early morning walk to see 'em. The tour was officially over at noon so I unsuccessfully attempted to find a Harris Sparrow previously reported in the area. In looking for the Harris, I left the group that was going to check "one more location" for long-eared owls.

On Tuesday of the next week, Travis published the trip list for the Owl Prowl. That last spot they checked at the Patoka boat launch area produced - you guessed it - a Barn Owl!!! I got the email at 2:00 pm on Tuesday. By 6:00 am Wednesday, I loaded my 89-year-old mother into my pick-up and headed for Fayette Co. We were there just after 10:30. We covered the North end of the parking lot first, flushing several Eastern and saw a sleeping Saw-Whet. Next came the South end. There was a huge U-shaped area formed by pine tree plantings. First time through, we found Yellow-Rumps, Golden-Crown Kinglets, White-Breasted Nuthatches, Red-Breasted Nuthatches, and others. Nothing - beginning to look like another Zero.

I told mom that I wanted to take one more walk through, if nothing else, to pick up some pellets from where I'd seen the Long-eared Owls roosting. On my hands and knees, putting pellets into some containers, I suddenly heard a mob of Blue Jays scolding something. Still on my knees, I looked up to see a Barn Owl fly into the tree directly above me. It was being harassed, but took a moment to look straight down at me. I didn't move a muscle, just watched. It looked from me to the Jays, back to me, and then took flight, heading north. I tried for another hour to relocate it, without success. But finally, at last, I'd had a quick look at this beautiful bird. TRE - 1/2 Nemesis Bird - 7

April found Jan and me in Florida with Larry Manfredi. I inquired about Barn Owls. He said "no problem, I know a guaranteed spot on the 3rd day of our adventure". Well, investigation of the "guaranteed roost" produced only a flight feather. Upon leaving, we found a dead Barn Owl lying near the road, possibly hit by a car. TRE - 1/2 Nemesis - 8

For the spring 2008 edition of Illinois Audubon magazine, Dan Thompson wrote a great article on State endangered species. He ended the article by saying "The Barn Owl is a magnificent bird with an important ecological niche and with luck it will be around for future generations to appreciate and cherish." I believe him, the Barn Owl is magnificent. But I'll always call it THAT DARN OWL!!

I still need that long look, to really study this bird. I'll get it someday. I'm still a rookie as highlighted in Wisconsin. Our Fall Saw Whet Owl with Tom May trip took us to a viewing platform at Necedah. Someone asked "What are those big swan-like birds swimming over there?" Without looking through the scope or even binos, I said probably a mute. WRONG! Marilyn Campbell straightened us out, they were Trumpeters. Thanks, Marilyn

My truck has gas in it and my 91-year-old Mother is always ready for an adventure.

Lake Chautauqua NWR Tour Re-cap

by Deb Roe

On May 15, 2010 several Peoria Audubon members were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of Lake Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge. Lee Albright, Supervisory Manager for USFWS, met us on a cloudy Saturday morning. We drove around the levees stopping at various points along the way. Mr. Albright explained the water level manipulation process currently underway to control the willow population in the lakes. Some improvements to the levees and the willow control work has been delayed due to the continued high water level of the Illinois River.

Interesting sights around the refuge included the water level control structure between Quiver Creek and the lake. A massive school of invasive carp were jumping at one of the water control gates attempting to get out of the lake, as they sensed the water levels dropping. As the cloudy skies started drizzling, Mr. Albright showed us the cormorant rookery. A few of dark black birds took flight, as we passed their nesting site. The willow control being done at the lake is being managed to protect the rookery.

We decided the drizzle wasn't enough to keep the hardy bird watchers at bay, so we continued our trek around the levees. A pair of pileated woodpeckers worked their way around the cottonwoods in the flooded bottom land forest. Canadian geese had commandeered the Bald Eagles' nest at the south end of the North Lake. It was an unusual sight looking at the goose sticking its neck out, high in its oversized condo in the sky. An osprey maintained his stern perch on the limbless trees, as we passed him on the west levee. A killdeer's wounded bird display warned us to steer clear of its egg, perched atop the levee. The egg narrowly escaped being ran over by our tires.

After driving around Chautauqua, Mr. Albright led us over to USFW moist soil management plots at Emiquon NWR. He explained some future plans for a rotational wetland in the area referred to as the "south lobe".

The tour was enjoyable and informative. Audubon will wait patiently, along with the USFWS, for the water levels to drop, in order for the USFWS to continue their plans to improve bird habitat at the Chautauqua Wildlife Refuge.



Wounded bird display of the Killdeer
Photo by D. Endicott

Inside: SPECIAL AUDUBON EVENT AT LAKEVIEW MUSEUM

When does your annual membership expire?

Check the date on your mailing label

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Peoria Audubon member, Thad Edmunds, wrote a great article that was published in Illinois Audubon Magazine. For those members who didn't get a chance to read it yet, Thad was gracious enough to allow us to reprint it here, enjoy:

THAT DARN BIRD

BY THAD R. EDMONDS

Everyone has a nemesis, something, right? Well mine was a Tyto Alba - I had to see this bird! I became obsessed with it. It was everywhere: books, magazines, TV, CBC's, SBC's, and sightings all over the state. (Well it seemed like it.) I wanted in on this bird, I WANT TO SEE THIS BIRD! But wait, we're getting ahead of the story.

Born in 1946; an Eagle Scout in 1960; Worked at Caterpillar Tractor Co. for 34 years and traveled to 17 different countries before I retired (No Birding yet). I began birding after I retired because I wanted to do something new and different.

Growing up we had Ladder-backed Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Nuthatches at our feeders year round. Sure we did. What we had were Red-bellied woodpeckers and White Breasted Nuthatches misidentification...that's what we had.

So on January 4, 2004 I went on my first Christmas Bird Count with Maury Bucker and Emiko Yang and saw my first Greater White-Fronted Goose. I was hooked.

My wife Jan and I saw Prairie Chickens in March and Vern Kleen wowed us with new birds.

April came and we went on a guided tour with Dr. Bert Princen. Bert mentioned that if we wanted to learn about birds, we should read, read, and read some more. Then spend as much time as we could in the field, observing bird behavior. Even if we made mistakes, every observation would give us a new perspective and more experience.

Then the Spring Bird Count with Maury and Emiko pumped me full of the avian flu. After that we went to Southern IL with Vern Kleen. WOW !! The life birds were really piling up, 154 already. I joined PAS, IAS, IOS and ABA and got wired into IBET. We're cookin' now!!

My wife Jan mentioned one night that PBS had a program about "Silent Flight". An Englishman was doing studies with a Barn Owl, discerning how they locate prey in low light, and how they fly through dense forested areas. As soon as I watched that show, I knew I had to see that OWL!!! But where? When? How?

As summer turned into the fall of 2005, I watched as some of our yard birds began to disappear and new ones starting coming to our feeders. American Goldfinches lost their bright yellow plumage to Fall dull colors. One afternoon I was standing in the sun porch looking at a huge mixed flock of birds in the field beyond our yard. I noticed some European Starlings, a few Brown-headed Cowbirds, and a few Common Grackles. Hey, wait a minute, here's a bird I've never seen before. Get Sibley's!! We've got some rare birds! But what are they? They were the size of a Starling. They had gray heads with black bills and white spots just like a Starling! Oh boy am I glad I didn't post on IBET about an immature starling!



....Continued inside....