

Peoria Audubon Society

Newsletter

No. 5

A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

December 1987

BE A PART OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Most of us are within 10 miles of one or more of the three Christmas bird counts sponsored by Peoria Audubon in this central Illinois area. Would you like to:

- (a) have fun
- (b) see lots of neat birds
- (c) contribute to our understanding of bird populations

Even if you don't know a finch from a fly-catcher (and certainly if you do), you can participate in this winter's Christmas bird count coordinated by NAS "American Bird's" magazine, for a nominal fee. If you are not sure about your bird identification skills tell your CBC leader and you will be assigned to a group with an experienced birder.

Peoria Audubon Society's three counts, dates and compilers are:

- December 19, Chillicothe, Dick Collins - Call Louise Endres to sign up - 682-8500
- December 26, Chautauqua, Dick Bjorklund - 677-3012
- January 2, Peoria, Louis Endres - 682-8500

The fee for participating is \$4.00. If you participate in two or more counts the fee drops to \$3.50 for the other counts. If you are interested in helping, call the compilers for more information.

Louise Endres

LOCAL COUNT AREAS

The Peoria CBC area lies within a circle 15 miles in diameter, centering in upper Bradley Park, which includes parts of Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties.

The Chillicothe CBC is within a circle which centers at Route 29 and the southern city limits, with a diameter of 15 miles.

The Chautauqua CBC area centers near Chautauqua Wildlife Refuge and Goofy Ridge and includes parts of Fulton, Mason and Tazewell Counties.



ILLINOIS BIRD AND BIRDING

Illinois Bird and Birding, in its third year as a quarterly journal published by the Illinois Audubon Society, may not be familiar to many Illinois birders who would find its contents pertinent and enlightening. The journal is devoted to information about nesting, migrations, wintering, rare occurrences, identifications, field trips, site guides, ecology, and behavior of birds in our own state. It would seem that we should be supported in this endeavor. Annual subscription price is \$10 from the Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 608, Wayne, Illinois 60184.

CALENDAR

December Audubon Meeting	Wed., Dec. 9
Chillicothe CB Count	Sat., Dec. 19
Chautauqua CB Count	Sat., Dec. 26
Peoria CB Count	Sat., Jan. 2
January Meeting	Wed., Jan. 13
February Meeting	Wed., Feb. 10

The December meeting is traditionally member's night. This is your chance to shine! Bring 10 or so of your favorite nature slides to share. All meetings are at Lakeview at 7:30 p.m. except the January meeting which starts at 6:30 p.m.

The new Audubon year will start with a potluck dinner at the January meeting. Bring your table service, covered dish and come! Time 6:30 p.m. Following the food will be a time for sharing CBC experiences.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

During our recent travels to the Netherlands we had the opportunity to visit headquarters of the Dutch Society for the Preservation of Birds, the equivalent of the Audubon Society in the U.S. At the Society's bookstore they were advertising the publication next month of the Atlas of the Birds of the Netherlands. This publication was preceded by the Breeding Atlas, which was the equivalent of what we are working on now in Illinois. Holland and the other European countries have gone one better. They have now surveyed on a monthly basis for five additional years. They did 1,767 survey blocks of 5x5 km. (3x3 miles) each. More than 5,000 bird watchers participated and they turned in 220,000 checklists containing over 5 million observations. Total number of species observed was 426. Monthly maps will be published for 197 species that are found year around, and seasonal maps for 55 species that are found either during the summer or in the winter. Rarer birds will only be honored by one to three maps each.

I am just giving these statistics to show you what can be done. I have the feeling that Vernon Kleen would give his left arm to receive a similar kind of cooperation in Illinois. Within a few months I hope to have a copy of the book, so we can all see what it looks like. Unfortunately, select few of us can read it because it will be published in the Dutch language. However, it may serve as inspiration when we start our third year next spring here in Illinois.

L. H. Princen

LOCAL HERONRY REPORT

Nesting activity at Clear Lake and Worley Lake heronries was again monitored this year by Dr. Richard Bjorklund of Bradley University who conducts continuing research at those two area lakes.

Worley Lake, an Illinois River backwater north of Pekin, was the location of one of the largest heronries in Illinois from 1935 until 1973. Clear cutting of nearby timber may have been a major factor in the abandonment of the site. Recently this site has become part of a conservation area managed by the Department of Conservation following purchase facilitated by the Forest Park Foundation.

In the summer of 1986, Max Runkle of the DOC and Dr. Bjorklund discovered renewed nesting not far from the original location. Ninety-four nests, successful breeding of four species, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, and the presence of another species, Yellow-crowned Night Heron were confirmed. This nesting activity was in an area of somewhat over one acre.

In 1987 the nests of Great Blue Herons increased from the 1986 number of 12 to 67 active nests. Fifty-four were successful (egg-laying or fledging). Great Egret nests in 1986 numbered 8, but increased to 29 in 1987, 19 were successful. The greatest increase was in Black-crowned Night Heron nests, from 65 in 1986 to 172 this year, with 124 successful.

Dr. Bjorklund also report results of the 1987 nesting season at Clear Lake near Chautauqua NWR as follows.

- Great Blue Herons - 315 active nests
- Great Egrets - 61 active nests
- Black-crowned Night Herons - 28 successful nests

REPORT OF 1987 BREEDING ATLAS SURVEYS

Peoria Audubon committed itself to participate in 1987 in the Illinois Breeding Atlas and I undertook, again, the task of coordinator. Fulton and Mason Counties were the designated new territories to be covered. It was not easy to get volunteers to participate this time, probably because it was farther away from Peoria. When the counts were all completed, we covered 9 assigned blocks in Mason and 7 assigned blocks in Fulton County. Mason County was covered by Dick Bjorklund (1 block), Louise Endres (2), John Todt (1) and Vernon Kleen (5). Fulton County was serviced by Helen Gasdorf, JoAnn Block, Virginia Humphreys, Don Schmidt, Bob Easton and A. J. Novotny, Margaret Hickerson and me, for 1 block each. Thanks to Vernon Kleen, all blocks in Mason County were covered, but 8 blocks in Fulton County went begging for additional participants.

Now for the results: In Mason County, 50 species were confirmed nesting; 18 were deemed probably nesters, 16 possible nesters, and 5 additional species were observed, but no nesting activities could be discovered in the designated blocks. The most unexpected confirmed nester in Mason County was the Ruddy Ducks.

In Fulton County the equivalent numbers were; 36 confirmed, 22 probable, 19 possible, and 18 observed for a total of 95 species. The unexpected confirmed nester was the Spotted Sandpiper.

The coming year Woodford and Marshall Counties are going to be added. Those are closer to home, and I hope that we will get more participation. When we compare our output with that of the other areas of the state, or with efforts in other countries (see elsewhere in this newsletter), I know that we can do better. I hope that you will sign on next spring for the third year in this five year study. I am sure that you will enjoy it. I will be knocking at your door.

L. H. Princen
Coordinator

SCIENTISTS STUDY NORRIS FARM OPTIONS

Scientists from three Federal and four state agencies will meet November 17-19 in Springfield to study the feasibility of the purchase of Norris Farms in Fulton County. The farms could be converted to a lake and used to augment the declining Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge just across the Illinois River. Norris Farms is the former site of backwater Thompson and Flag Lakes.

Participants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Illinois Natural History Survey, the Illinois departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Transportation will pool their ideas for the best use of a possible Lake Chautauqua/Norris Farms combination.

Reports from the study are to be completed January 1, according to Dr. Richard Bjorklund, representative for Peoria Audubon on the local feasibility committee for the project. He suggests that we be ready to attend a public meeting to discuss the report in Havana during February or March. Peoria Audubon has supported a study of this proposal through Dr. Bjorklund's participation and with funding.

BRIEFS

The Audubon-Sierra Club bird seed sale October 17 surpassed last year's record by selling 7,000 pounds of seed, in 5 hours yet! Seven types of bird seed were sold as well as various types of feeders and even binoculars. Thanks to all, both Sierra Club and Audubon members who helped with this project.

A nominating committee of Chairman Judy Malson, John Marshall and Joyce Blumenshine are hard at work putting together a slate of officers. Please try to be cooperative if you are called.

All the would-be Audubon journalists step forward! The newsletter editors are retiring from the job with this issue.

FIELD NOTES

On 17 October, fourteen members and guests left Powerton on a cloudy, windy, and cool morning for the traditional fall birding tour of the Illinois Valley south to Havana on the east side of the river. We returned to Peoria on the west side of the river in late afternoon sunshine and a blaze of fall color.

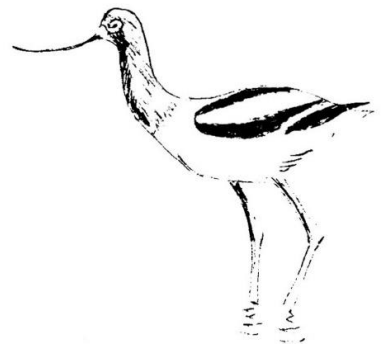
Highlights of the trip, in which 70 species were seen, included: walking the new trail into the wildlife management and snowmobile area at the Spring Lake Recreation Area; hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants; many Great Blue Herons, and Great Egrets, Mute Swans; Canada Geese; Snow Geese-dark phase; twelve species of ducks; Turkey Vulture; goods looks at four species of hawks - Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, and Kestrel; Bonaparte's Gull; a "Peterson specimen" of the Eastern Phoebe; two Carolina Wrens calling simultaneously; Eastern Bluebird; White-breasted Nuthatches ground feeding on fallen ripe persimmon fruit; White-crowned as well as White-throated sparrows; and "at least a million" flocking and roosting Red-winged Blackbirds. Five white-tailed deer were also seen.

R. Bjorklund

The annual fall field trip to the Metropolitan Sanitary District, Canton, was held October 24, led by Bert Princen and attended by 14 birders. A generally sunny, but windy day with temperatures in the forties made for a pleasant outing.

A good representation of hawk species: Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Rough-legged, Red-tailed, Northern Harrier and Kestrel were tallied. Participants who look forward to seeing ducks on this trip were not disappointed with 9 species, in addition to Pied-billed Grebe, Mute Swan and Canada and Snow Geese. Many migrating Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen as well as a number of Eastern Bluebirds. Wintering Purple Finches were evident. Ten species of sparrows including Savannah, Vesper, Fox and Swamp were identified.

Despite cool temperatures early in the fall season combined with very dry conditions, a number of interesting sightings have been reported. All the warblers which migrate through our area were seen. Where mud flats could be found, shore birds were present. Wintering birds from north have arrived, including some Bald Eagles. A Greater Black-backed Gull was seen at Duck Island Farm for a time. Two American Avocets, 2 Peregrine Falcons and a Hudsonian Godwit were observed in the Big Lake area. A Harris Sparrow was reported 10/14. November 7-8 a Reeve was located at Worley Lake.



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