

## Habitat Corner...

by Maury Brucker

Spring has not quite arrived in terms of most of the migrating songbirds. Granted, ducks and geese are already moving north and this is the best time to find resident birds which start their breeding songs early. In preparation for the next wave of migration, now is a great time look closely for bird habitat to explore for specific birds later.

Birds are wide ranging and need a lot of habitat. Birders who continually look for more and more species soon take a landscape view also. The structure of plants is a key factor in differentiating habitats. Factors to look for include differences in overstory, understory and groundcover.

Some birds prefer open vegetation for finding flying insects (eg. Great-crested Flycatcher) while others stay close to the thick brambles and vines for cover and roosting (eg. Gray Catbird). Before plants leaf out, habitat structure can be easily seen. Forest habitats in our area range from wet bottomland forest along rivers and streams, to dry upland forests. Most of our quality open wetlands are gone. Even the river will hardly support aquatic vegetation. Thus we have very few wetland breeding bird populations. The original prairies have been plowed and are gone, although some grassland birds have adapted to pastures. A few areas are restoring prairie, but these are often small and isolated. Most grassland birds require large, contiguous expanses of non-plowed habitat. Talk with other birders about where they have seen particular birds. Even if the sought after bird is not found at the time, learning the particulars of habitat preference will increase your chances next time.

## The Tax Man Cometh... But Don't Forget the Critters!

Don't forget the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund. Donate dollars to keep the birds, the fish, the flowers and the butterflies from vanishing.

Line 15a, IL-1040 of the state income tax form



March/April 1996

# Bird's-Eye View

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



## Species Spotlight... Belted Kingfisher

by Brenda Onken

If you are walking by a creek, lake, pond or river and you hear a loud, dry rattle, you are probably in the company of a Belted Kingfisher. This bird has unique looks and characteristics. Both male and female are a pretty blue-gray above and have a broad blue-gray breast band. The female has an additional rust-colored belly band. They have a ragged crest on their head and their bill is very big. This big bill serves two important purposes. First it makes catching a fish a lot easier. Small fish make up a large part of their diet. They will also eat tadpoles of bullfrogs and some insects such as grasshoppers and beetles. Kingfishers catch their prey by diving from a perch or hovering above the water. The perch is generally a limb hanging out over the water or sometimes a telephone wire. In the winter these birds try to find any open water they can.

These birds are fairly solitary in the winter, but when Spring comes they will pair up and share nest building activities. Both will defend their territory.

The kingfisher's nest is an excavated burrow in a high bank. Here's where that big bill comes in handy again. They dig with the bill and scoop out the loose dirt with their feet. The tunnel averages from 3 to 6 feet in length but it may be up to 15 feet long in rare cases. It may take only a few days or up to two weeks to construct the nest burrow. Once complete, the female will lay 6 to 8 white eggs. Baby kingfishers are able to fly when fledged from the nest. The family stays close for a couple of weeks while the parents teach the art of fishing. Once the young have mastered the skill, they are on their own.



## Eagle Count Results...

by Marj Tattersall

The Peoria Audubon Society's Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Count was held on Saturday, January 27, 1996. We had 11 participants divided into four teams which covered the Illinois River from Henry to Havana. We had 125 adults, 71 immatures, and 8 unidentified for a grand total of 204.

Here's a breakdown of the four teams results:

	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Immatures</u>	<u>Unidentified</u>	
Northeast Team (Henry to Peoria)	19	7	8	
Northwest Team (Henry to Peoria)	35	29	—	
Southeast Team (Peoria to Havana)	37	16	—	
Southwest Team	34	19	—	
Totals	125	71	8	= 204

The count numbers were high due to cold weather which forced the Bald Eagles to concentrate along the open Illinois River channel. (In warmer winters they disperse to the backwaters where we do not have access to for counting). I'm very pleased with this winter's count, especially with the 34.8% immature figure.

A special thanks to all of the Peoria Audubon Members who made this count possible!

# 1995 Christmas Bird Count Totals

Species	Peoria 12/16	Chaut 12/23	Chilli 12/30	Species	Peoria 12/16	Chaut 12/23	Chilli 12/30
Common Loon				Northern Flicker	20	20	14
Horned Grebe				Pileated Woodpecker	4	11	2
Eared Grebe				Red-bellied Woodpecker	50	80	68
Pied-billed Grebe		6		Red-headed Woodpecker	6	25	7
American White Pelican**				Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	4	2
Double-crested Cormorant	3	2		Hairy Woodpecker	16	16	12
Great Blue Heron	10	60	2	Downy Woodpecker	103	95	80
Black-crowned Night Heron				Eastern Phoebe**			
Mute Swan		11		Horned Lark	9	40	12
Canada Goose	1595	6236	702	Blue Jay	169	539	92
Snow Goose				American Crow	363	265	258
Mallard	601	10818	1367	Black-capped Chickadee	226	135	172
American Black Duck	8	75	22	Carolina Chickadee**			
Gadwall	40	110	4	Tufted Titmouse	73	92	85
Northern Pintail				White-breasted Nuthatch	69	52	66
Green-winged Teal	1	2		Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	1	
Blue-winged Teal**				Brown Creeper	16	11	8
American Wigeon				House Wren**			
Northern Shoveler	34		1	Winter Wren			2
Wood Duck	5	2	3	Carolina Wren	5	9	13
Redhead		13		Marsh Wren**			
Ring-necked Duck		38		Sedge Wren			
Canvasback	2	3	2	Northern Mockingbird		5	1
Greater Scaup**				American Robin		3	
Lesser Scaup	2	74		Hermit Thrush		1	
Common Goldeneye	142	193	21	Eastern Bluebird	7	14	6
Bufflehead		2	36	Golden-crowned Kinglet		5	
Oldsquaw				Ruby-crowned Kinglet			1
White-winged Scoter**				Cedar Waxwing	18	20	
Surf Scoter**				Northern Shrike**	2		
Black Scoter**				Loggerhead Shrike**			
Ruddy Duck				European Starling	1637	630	570
Hooded Merganser		29		Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	6	
Common Merganser	59	1543	561	House Sparrow	1189	445	662
Red Breasted Merganser		1		European Tree Sparrow		180	
Turkey Vulture				Eastern Meadowlark			
Black Vulture**				Western Meadowlark**			
Northern Goshawk**				Red-winged Blackbird	10	228	85
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	5		Rusty Blackbird			
Cooper's Hawk	3	1		Brewer's Blackbird**			
Red-tailed Hawk	56	61	34	Common Grackle	90		
Red-shouldered Hawk		1		Brown-headed Cowbird	8		
Rough-legged Hawk	1	14	5	Northern Cardinal	197	305	130
Golden Eagle**				Evening Grosbeak			
Bald Eagle	(18a/24i)42	(35a/35i/1?)71	(26a/42i/6?)74	Purple Finch		7	3
Northern Harrier		3		House Finch	107	3	16
Peregrine Falcon**				Pine Grosbeak**			
Merlin**				Common Redpoll			
American Kestrel	34	18	29	Pine Siskin	48	36	
Common Bobwhite	12	51		American Goldfinch	112	155	112
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	15	3	Red Crossbill			
Gray Partridge**				White-winged Crossbill**			
Wild Turkey		12	1	Rufous-sided Towhee	CW	1	
Sandhill Crane**			2	Le Conte's Sparrow**			
Virginia Rail**				Savannah Sparrow			
American Coot		1		Vesper Sparrow**			
Killdeer	8	10	1	Dark-eyed Junco	454	868	313
American Woodcock**				American Tree Sparrow	256	518	115
Common Snipe		1	13	Field Sparrow		2	
Glaucous Gull				Harris' Sparrow**			
Herring Gull	1210	31	56	White-crowned Sparrow	2	1	
Thayer's Gull				White-throated Sparrow	34	24	31
Ring-billed Gull	2541	130	839	Fox Sparrow			
Bonaparte's Gull	2	5		Lincoln's Sparrow**			
Rock Dove	831	49	20	Swamp Sparrow	6	84	7
Mourning Dove	221	39	105	Song Sparrow	73	160	34
Barn Owl**				Lapland Longspur			
Eastern Screech Owl		3	1	Snow Bunting			
Great Horned Owl	CW	5	1				
Snowy Owl							
Barred Owl	2	2	6				
Long-eared Owl							
Short-eared Owl							
Northern Saw-whet Owl							
Belted Kingfisher	14	11	5				
				** Indicates Documented Species			
				Total Species:	65(+2 CW)	82	59
				Total Birds:	12869	24853	6895

## Peoria Spring Count...

**Saturday, May 4**

It's getting to be that time of year again. Mark your calendars. If you have participated before, be expecting a call. If you haven't, but would like to, call Mike Miller at Forest Park Nature Center (309)686-3360.

## Recent Sightings...

Sightings by The Princen's

Trumpeter Swan, Jan 1: Two grazing on corn field just south of Powerton Cooling Lake.  
Mute Swan, Jan 13 and Feb 10: Up to 10 at Spring Lake.  
Peregrine Falcon, Jan 27: Adult male flying over the corn field and sitting in bush at south end of Spring Lake.  
Sandhill Crane, Jan 6: Two adults feeding in corn field just south of Santa Fe railroad tracks east, 1/2 mile east of Rt. 26, near Sun Foundation camp.  
Iceland Gull, Jan 27: Completely white bird, smaller than Herring Gull, was flying around at Peoria Lock and Dam.  
Lesser Black-backed Gull, Jan 27: This species was seen at same time as Iceland Gull, together with many Herring and Ring-billed Gulls.  
Glaucous Gull, Jan 13: This very large, completely white gull was on Powerton Cooling Lake south of Pekin, together with Herring and Ring-billed Gulls.  
Ringed Turtle Dove, Jan 27: This European Pigeon was seen at Pekin Energy alcohol plant near the grain silos.  
Short-eared Owl, Jan 13: Six birds were seen at their regular haunts near Victoria, IL.  
Northern Mockingbird, Jan 6: Seen flying alongside road near Sun Foundation in Washburn, IL.  
Rufous-sided Towhee, Jan 6: A female of the western spotted race was seen at the feeders in the Princen's backyard for two days.  
Eastern Meadowlark, Feb 10: Four birds had obviously only recently returned from their wintering area.  
Rusty Blackbird, Jan 6: About 150 of this species were feeding in a corn field near the Sun Foundation near Washburn, IL. There were also some Red-winged Blackbirds mixed in but the white eyes and typical brown winter color was seen well.  
Pine Siskin, Jan and Feb: up to 40 siskins have frequented the Princen's feeders. Recently, only 2 or 3 birds are seen, together with up to 6 goldfinches.  
Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Jan 1: About 150 birds of this species were seen together in some bushes on Duck Creek Island, together with some American Tree Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows. The Same flock was seen at the Christmas Count.

Other Sightings...

Red-wing Blackbird, Jan 27: Chautauqua NWR, Virginia Humphreys, Eunice Tjaden, Brenda Onken.  
Brown-headed Cowbird, Jan 27: Rice Lake, Virginia Humphreys, Eunice Tjaden, Brenda Onken.  
Mute Swan, Hooded Merganser, Jan 27, Virginia Humphreys, Eunice Tjaden, Brenda Onken.  
Carolina Wren, Two were seen by Brenda Onken at Farmdale Park.  
Great-horned Owl, A pair was hooting it up at Brenda Onken's House.  
Pine Siskins, Nov 11: Bird Feeder; Metamora, IL, Justin Rink.  
Common Redpoll (female); Dec 27: Bird Feeder; Metamora, IL, Justin Rink.  
Evening Grosbeak (male), Jan 1: Bird Feeder; Metamora, IL, Justin Rink.  
5 Bald Eagles (4 adults, 1 juvenile), Jan 7: Woodford Fish and Wildlife Area, Justin Rink.

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Send submissions to:  
Birds Eye View c/o Mike Miller  
Forest Park Nature Center  
5809 Forest Park Drive  
Peoria IL 61614  
email [xxfpnc@heartland.bradley.edu](mailto:xxfpnc@heartland.bradley.edu)  
FAX (309) 686-8820

## An Invitation from HOI Sierra Club to Wander Site M... April 27

Sierra Club members will receive a preview of the 1500 acre mega site to be developed by IDNR during the next 10 years. We will meet at 10:00 AM at the site M office located on Cass County Hwy 11, six miles north of Ill 125 and the village of Philadelphia. Peoria Area club members who want to car pool should meet at 8:00 AM at Forest Park Nature Center. Dan Riggs, Site Superintendent, will give an overview of the proposed development plan. We will then visit the Hill Prairie restoration area, The Cox Creek Indiana Bat Habitat, and segments of the proposed 30 mile equestrian trail. Bring a day pack with lunch, liquids and sun-block. Be prepared to go crosscountry on hilly terrain and wade a shallow creek. Returning to Peoria in the late afternoon, we will stop at Sand Lake on Ill 97 south of Havana. Illinois Audubon has a campaign to acquire this site as a nature preserve. Questions? Call Rudy Habben at (309)685-5605. Additional guide info available at April Meeting.

## Field Trips...

Illinois River Wander

**Saturday, March 16**

Meet at Powerton parking lot at 7:30 AM. This trip will be to observe any migrating waterfowl and any other early returns. Pack a lunch. We will be doing the circle- going along the river to Havana and up the other side. We will be stopping at Spring Lake, Chautauqua, Sand Lake, Rice Lake and Banner Marsh. Should be a full day of great birding. Call Brenda Onken (309)923-7676 for RSVP and more info.

**Date of MSD Field Trip Changed...**

**New Date, Saturday, April 6**

Join Dr. Bert Princen for a trip to the Canton Metropolitan Sanitary District which is a major stopover for shorebirds and waterbirds on their spring migration. Dr. Princen says that every species of duck in Illinois can be seen on a good day. Call Dr Princen at (309)691-9148 for reservations and more information.

**Churchill & Riding Mountain, Canada**

**June 15-28, 1996**

Fly from Chicago to Churchill for five spectacular days of arctic birding. The trip includes daily searches for unique species such as Ross' and Sabine's gulls, jaegers, Pacific and Red-throated Loons, Oldsquaw, Harlequin Duck, Snowy, Boreal and Hawk Owls. Polar Bears and Seals may also be found. A must do trip.

Contact David Miller, 813 N Center, McHenry, IL 60050.  
(815)385-5428

**Australia & New Zealand Birding Trip**

**October 28 - November 19, 1996**

A Unique birding trip to wild places along the east coast of the "Island Continent," from tropical Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef in the north to Lamington National Park near Brisbane, Royal National Park out of Sidney, and the Melbourne area. In New Zealand, you'll visit Little Barrier Island, Stewart Island (for kiwis), Beautiful Milford Sound and its fjords, and Taiaroa Head.

Contact Vernon Kleen, RR #2, Box 481, Athens, IL 62613  
(217)636-8476.

**Early Worm Bird Walks**

**Sunday's 6:00 AM, April 16 - May 26**

**Forest Park Nature Center**

Join Chief Naturalist, Mike Miller, and be one of the early worms that catches the bird! A great place to spot woodland warblers and other forest dwellers. Call (309)686-3360 for more info.

# Conservation Report... by Les Bodell

On January 11, Dr. Princen, Dr. Brucker and I had the privilege of meeting with Representative Ray LaHood and discussing The Endangered Species Act. Although he gave us ample time to express our views, I left feeling that we had not quite convinced him of the importance of protecting endangered species. There is still time to act, so I encourage each of you to write or phone Representative Ray LaHood and ask him to vote "NO" on H.R. 2275. He may be called locally at (309)671-7027 or at his Washington Office at (202)225-6201. His address is: The Honorable Ray LaHood, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C. 20515.

Also on January 11, The Illinois Department of National Resources held an open house in Virginia, IL to present their master plan and take comments on what is known as Site M, which lies in Cass County. This area, encompassing 15,574 acres (or almost 25 square miles), was recently acquired from Commonwealth Edison Power Company and is the DNR's largest single tract of land. It is located near Chandlerville and is 75 miles northwest of Springfield. It is almost evenly divided into cropland, oldfield and forest. Some of the cropland will be phased out and turned into greenspace while others will remain in crops. The plan envisions multiple use of the area to include hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and sightseeing. While the plan has many merits, it seems to fall short in one major area—it does not include a refuge or non-hunting area, including the 175 acre Cox Creek Hill Prairie Natural Area. The comment period ends March 1, and I feel that we need to write and ask that a refuge area be included in the plan, one that encompasses the Cox Creek Hill Prairie area. Comments should be addressed to: Site M, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Realty and Environmental Planning, 524 South Second Street, Division of Planning, Springfield, IL 62701-1787.

## Upcoming Meetings...

**Wednesday, March 13, 7:00 PM @ Lakeview Museum**

### **Membership Meeting**

**Program:** Diane Rudin of The Illinois Nature Conservancy will present a slide program about the Mackinaw River Project. Diane is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Mackinaw River Project. She has some beautiful slides and will share with us information on how habitat protection along the Mackinaw is helping animals like the River Otter.

**\*\*Note- Change in day and location\*\***

**Friday, April 12, 7:00 PM @ Forest Park Nature Center...**

### **Membership Meeting**

**Program:** Dan Riggs, Site Superintendent at Sand Ridge State Forest and acting Site Superintendent of Site M, a recently acquired large land tract by the DNR. Dan will present us with the latest information on this latest habitat acquisition.

**PEORIA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
PEORIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE  
1125 West Lake Avenue  
Peoria IL 61614**



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Virginia Humphreys..... 1996

### **Information**

Greet Princen....(309)691-0519