

Bird's-Eye View

January
February
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



Critical Bird Habitat

by Maury Brucker

Following up on a series about finding birds by first finding their habitats, this new series will begin a dialogue about the most important types of bird habitat in central Illinois—those few habitats that support our rarest or our most characteristic birds.

Without these groups of birds, the diversity we can see on field trips would be much less.

With agricultural development and increasing urbanization continuing to change the landscape, few natural areas have been unaffected. Fortunately many species of breeding birds are adaptable to changes in the landscape. Migrants have continued to stop over and may still be found in numbers because they are concentrated at fewer rest stops and, as birders, we are becoming better at finding them. Wintering birds tend to come from sparsely vegetated areas and stay here as long as food can be found. Some species of breeding birds however are highly dependant on very specific types of habitat without which they will not regularly occur in our area.

The groups of birds with their requisite habitats which I would suggest are critical for our area are the following:

- Colonial nesting water birds — although not rare now; what would it be like not to see egrets and herons along the river and streams.
- Large numbers of warblers, vireos, flycatchers and other migrants stopping to feed in the forested river bluffs and other forests.
- Prairie birds which became meadow birds when pastures were in the crop rotation have now become hard to find.
- Wetland breeding birds are already rare but the migration stopping points are essential for a diversity of shorebirds on our trip lists.

If you have other critical habitat or groups of birds in our area which I have not mentioned, please let me know.

Conservation Report

by Les Bodell

Thanks again to Kelly Seed and Hardware, Bert and Greet Princen and to all who bought seed at our annual bird seed sale. It was a great success and will help fund next year's activities.

For those of you who missed the last couple of meetings, I would like to report on my recent out of town Audubon Meetings. I attended the Great Lakes Regional Conference in Michigan City, Indiana. I learned a great deal more than I can put into this newsletter. We had nearly 200 delegates and the high point was a field trip to Jasper-Pulaski State Park where we viewed up to 15,000 Sandhill Cranes—something that I will not forget for a long time to come. Recently, I attended an Illinois Audubon Council meeting where we were brought up to date on what is going on around the state. Bert Princen presented a budget proposal for the IAC. During the lunch break, we took a short field trip and got to view up to 50 Snow Buntings along a gravel road near Freeport, Illinois.

This will be my last month as Conservation Chair. I would like to thank all of you who gave me both physical and moral support during my term, and I would ask you to keep up the good work in protecting wildlife habitat.

Ed note... I'm sure that all of us would like to thank Les for his energy and dedication. Thanks Les!



Species Spotlight...The Pine Siskin

by Brenda Onken

Happy New Year to everyone! Winter brings different birds here to Illinois. These birds pass through or stay to winter here with us. Tundra and Trumpeter Swans have been seen at Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge. Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks hunt in the fields. Juncos are fun to watch at our feeders.

Another bird that frequently shows up at our feeders is the Pine Siskin. This small finch-type bird is heavily brown streaked with yellow on the wings and base of the tail. The bill is very pointed—good

for getting at thistle seeds. They can often be seen joining the American Goldfinch at the same feeder. They tend to feed in small flocks, so they can really gobble up the seed quickly.

Away from the feeder, they inhabit weedy fields and conifer trees. Their call is a rising, buzzy “shree-eee.”

Having our feeders out in the winter offers the birds need food when things are scarce. It also gives us the opportunity to see birds up a little closer. Which is enjoyable. Be sure to look for the Pine

Siskin this winter. Several folks have seen them in the area this year.

Happy Birding in 1998!



Peoria Audubon Board

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Rick Fox – President
Mike Miller – Vice President
Greg Brown – Secretary
Greet Princen – Treasurer
Tracy Fox – Conservation

Board

Gary Garman 97/98
Helen Gasdorf 97/98
Luann Elwood 97/98
Jane Grzanich 98/99
Maury Brucker 98/99
Brenda Onken 98/99

1998... A New Year and New Officers...

So who will be serving as the Officers for the Board of Peoria Audubon in 1998? We thought that you might like to know:

Rick Fox, President – He has brought you many excellent programs in his 1997 role as Vice President. His skills as a birder have become very well known as has his interest in making Peoria Audubon one of the best Chapters around.

Mike Miller, Vice President – A naturalist at Forest Park Nature Center, and President of The Peoria Academy of Science will focus on getting the word out about our programs, outings and projects.

Greg Brown, Secretary – After a brief sabbatical from the position, Greg is back (with a new computer) willing to take on the task of record-keeping for Peoria Audubon.

Greet Princen, Treasurer – Greet returns to continue her excellent contributions to keeping Peoria Audubon a fiscally sound chapter.

Tracy Fox, Conservation Chair – Tracy takes on the task of keeping us up to date on local, regional and national conservation issues. Her skills in computer technology and information gathering will be a plus for our organization. She is also organizing the Chillicothe Christmas count this year.

And our Board Members – Gary Garman, Helen Gasdorf, Luann Elwood, Jane Grzanich, Maury Brucker, and Brenda Onken. They all bring excellent organizational skills, expertise in birding, connections to other organizations and institutions, and knowledge of local bird habitats. 1998 looks Great!

Upcoming Meetings...

January 7, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Board Meeting – The first meeting of the new board.

January 14, 6:30 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Annual Potluck – Bring your table setting and a dish to share. We will share results from the Christmas Counts.

February 11, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Membership Meeting – Angelo Capparella, Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Illinois State University will present the program "From the Andes to the Amazon: Ornithological Adventures in the Neotropics."

March 11, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Membership Meeting – Rick Fox, President of Peoria Audubon will present a program, "Birding the Web" focussing on how birders utilize the internet and World Wide Web to exchange information about birding and migration.

April 8, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Membership Meeting – Dr. L.H. Princen, Director from The Peoria Academy of Science and Peoria Audubon Member, will present the latest from his globetrotting video series. This program will focus on his recent birding trip to Europe.

May 18, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center

Membership Meeting – Program to be announced.

Events and Outings...

Saturday, January 24, 10:00 AM, Forest Park Nature Center

Eagle Day in Peoria – Join members of Peoria Audubon and Forest Park Nature Center Staff as we explore the status of the Bald Eagle in Central Illinois. We will first present a program on the eagle's status in Illinois, where to look for eagles, and proper eagle-watching etiquette. We will then caravan along the Illinois River in search of eagles.

Saturday, January 31, Annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Count

Four teams from Peoria Audubon will be looking for Bald Eagles along the Illinois River from Henry to Havana. If you are interested in being part of a team, Call Marj Tatersall at (309) 692-2247.

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