

# Bird's-Eye View

September  
October  
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

Fifth in the Series

by Maury Brucker

Wetlands, lakes and flowing waters are particularly important habitat for many bird species in our area. The Changing Illinois Environment: Critical Trends Assessment: Vol 3, 1994 detailed changes in wetlands and the impact on birds. Of the 43 endangered and threatened (E&T) birds in Illinois, 30 are strongly associated with wetlands. We have already discussed the colonial nesting egrets and herons of which 5 species are endangered or threatened. Twenty five (25) of the 30 wetland E&T species use shallow water for foraging and nesting. Nine (9) species depend upon deep water wetland and lakes for foraging, and eight (8) use other types of wetlands such as sedge meadows, wet prairies, mudflats and sandbars. In total, as many as 266 species of Illinois birds use wetlands during some stage of their life cycle.

By the 1980's, only about 10% of the natural wetlands remained in Illinois and these occupied 2.6 percent of the total area of Illinois. Another 1% of the total area are modified wetlands or artificial impoundments.

With the Illinois River and floodplain forests in the Peoria area, we have a relatively large proportion of riverine wetlands. Peoria area birders are fortunate to have access to public owned state conservation areas and Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge. Since these areas have historically been managed for duck populations, it is important to let the managers of these wetlands know of public interest in shorebirds and other wetland species also since different water levels are needed for different groups of species.

Wetland managers along the Illinois River are also struggling with high sedimentation and pollution which has killed most of the aquatic plants in the river. It is important for birders to support stemming the

### Species Spotlight...The Common Nighthawk

by Brenda Onken

I hope everybody had a nice summer. Fall migration is here... Our meetings are about to convene... So come and participate in some good programs and share exciting bird stories and sightings.

Have you ever walked out of a store, mall or your home at dusk to the sound of a nasal "peent" being called over your head? If so, be sure to look up next time to see the source of the song. The Common Nighthawk.

This bird has impressive aerial displays. They have quick erratic wingbeats, and can zoom straight up, dive, and seemingly turn on a dime while searching for food. It's greyish-brown color blends it in with the night sky, making its broad white bands under the wings its most distinguishing visual characteristic. The bill is small, but they have a wide, gaping mouth with which they can really scoop up night-flying insects such as mosquitoes, moths and beetles. Nighthawks don't build nests. They lay their eggs on gravelly ground and flat gravelled roofs offer a convenient man-made nesting habitat. When they perch, they sit lengthwise on a horizontal limb, and because of their color, can be very hard to see. I have found them during the day on a branch sitting so very still. They appear to be sleeping... and they are!

The Common Nighthawk is in a group of species known as "Night-jars," along with the Whip-Poor-Will and Chuck-Wills-Widow. These later species can be heard calling in Sand Ridge State Forest in the summer. Nighthawks can be seen migrating in groups during the day. Fall migration has already started and they are starting their long voyage to South America for the winter... "Have a good Flight!"



### Critical Bird Habitat continued...

sedimentation, pollution and other factors which are degrading the last 10% of our wetlands. Efforts to correct the situation must take into account the effect on bird population in the interim also. Protecting these natural wetlands and restoring additional wetlands are very important to maintaining the diversity of bird species in our area.

## Annual Bird Seed Sale

Pick-up Date: Saturday, November 7

Pick-up Location: Farmers Market @ Metro Centre

This is our annual fund-raiser for Peoria Audubon. Order Forms will be mailed to all members with the next Bird's-Eye-View newsletter. You will be receiving this in Mid October. All seed will be provided by Kelly Seed and Hardware, and we know that is the best around. So plan to buy your seed from Peoria Audubon at no extra cost.

## Upcoming Meetings...

**Wednesday, Sept 9, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center, Membership Meeting** – Maury Brucker and Emiko Yang will present a program on the restoration and preservation of the Hopwell Hill Prairie Natural Area in Marshall County.

**Wednesday, Sept 30, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center – Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, Oct 7, 7:00 PM... PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE TO FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH!!!**

**Forest Park Nature Center, Membership Meeting** – Paul Tebbel, Manager of Rowe Sanctuary, of The National Audubon Society, in Gibson Nebraska, will present an entertaining and fascinating look at the migration of Sandhill Cranes using video footage accompanied by his stories and extensive knowledge of cranes. Rowe Sanctuary regularly hosts over 10,000 cranes per mile of river during migration.

**Wednesday, Nov 11, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center – program to be announced**

**Wednesday, Dec 9, 7:00 PM, Forest Park Nature Center – Members Night...** Bring slides, videos or other info about your birding adventures.

**Wednesday, Jan 13, 6:30 PM, Forest Park Nature Center – Members Potluck,** bring a dish to share and table service.

## Upcoming Outings...

**Sat, Oct 17; Waterfowl and other migrants-**

Meet at 7:30 AM at Powerton Lake Fish and Wildlife Area Parking Lot. We will be stopping at Spring Lake, Chautauqua NWR, Banner Marsh and Rice Lake. Bring your lunch. Call Brenda Onken at 923-7676 for more info.

*Oct. 31*  
**Sat, Nov 1; Fieldtrip to the Greater Chicago Water Reclamation District near Canton.**

Bert Princen will be the trip leader. Meet either at intersection of Rt 116 and 78 in downtown Farmington at 8:00 am or at GCWRD Headquarters on Cuba Blacktop at 8:30 am. Please RSVP to Bert Princen at (309)691-0519

## Upcoming Counts...

Don't forget to plan for the Annual Christmas Bird Count Season.

**Chillicothe Count, Sat, Dec 19**  
Tracy Fox, (309)579-3264

...

**Chautauqua Count, Sat, Dec 26**  
Dr. Richard Bjorklund, (309)968-6502

...

**Peoria Count, Sat, Jan 2**  
Dr. Bert Princen, (309)691-0519

## Other News...

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network has designated **Chautauqua NWR**, which is part of the Illinois River Refuge, as a regionally significant site that provides critical habitat for Shorebird species of International concern.



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Layout and Editing by Mike Miller

Deadline for submissions to next issue:

**October 1.**

Send submissions to:

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