Bird's-Eye View

March 2002

The Newsletter of The Peoria Audubon Society

A Chapter of National Audubon since 1981 Ornithological-Audubon Chapter of The Peoria Academy of Sciences since 1930



Ramblings from the Prez ...

So, where is that sanctuary you promised?

Almost two years ago, the idea of a Peoria Audubon Sanctuary started to form. Since then, the idea has grown into an initiative. A small group of volunteers has met every few months to discuss their visions for a sanctuary. We have gone through the slow process of convincing ourselves that it is something worth doing and have formulated a basic plan for achieving the goal.

Last March, we kicked off fund-raising with a Dessert Social and Auction. The event, along with a mailing this fall, raised \$7000 for the initiative. I can't tell you how encouraged I am by this. Since the majority of this has been in \$20, \$50, and \$100 contributions, it tells me there is broad support for the effort.

We have been very encouraged to see new areas preserved and restoration plans put in place to protect thousands of acres in Central Illinois. The Nature Conservancy's project near Havana and The Wetland Initiative's project near Hennepin are major steps toward protecting and restoring wetland systems along the Illinois River. It is our hope that we can make a modest contribution right here in the Peoria area by creating a sanctuary for birds and birdwatching.

Currently, we are looking for the right property to come on the market or be donated. We are trying to position ourselves to take advantage of any appropriate local, state, and federal programs and grants when this happens. Please let us know if you have ideas or would like to help in any way. Also, please join us on **March 13th** for our second Dessert Social and Auction to help us continue toward this goal.

Calendar

Wednesday, March 13, 7:00 PM Sanctuary Fund Dessert Social & Fund-Raising Auction, Forest Park Nature Center

An evening of silent auctions, live bidding, and home-baked desserts in support of a great local cause. All proceeds will benefit Peoria Audubon's Sanctuary fund. Our goal is to establish a sanctuary to protect migratory and breeding bird habitat in Central Illinois.

Saturday, March 23, 8:00 AM Field Trip, Powerton, Spring Lake, and More

A trip down the Illinois River, beginning at Powerton State Fish and Wildlife area and continuing on to Spring Lake and points south. Meet at Powerton at 8:00 AM. Contact Bert Princen at 309-691-0519 to RSVP.

Saturday, April 6, 8:00 AM Field Trip, Metropolitan Sanitary District

A waterfowl extravaganza in this area near Canton, accessible only by special permission. Meet in downtown Farmington at 8:00 AM or at the MSD headquarters at 8:30 AM. Contact Bert Princen at 309-691-0519 to RSVP

Wednesday, April 10, 7:00 PM
Membership Meeting, Forest Park Nature Center
An interesting program, the latest bird sightings, plans for the
Spring Bird Counts, and detailed auction results.

Save the Dates

Sunday, April 28 Peoria Audubon's Bird-A-Thon Fund-Raiser

Saturday, May 4
Statewide Spring Bird Counts

Saturday, May 11 International Migratory Bird Day

All meetings and field trips are free and open to the public. For directions, call Forest Park Nature Center at 309-686-3360.

Rick Fox

Peoria Audubon's Second Annual Dessert Social & Fund-Raising Auction Wednesday, March 13, 2002 7:00 PM Forest Park Nature Center

Q: What are funds being raised for?

A: The auction is a fun evening that raises money for an important cause. Bird habitat is dwindling in Central Illinois. Peoria Audubon started its Sanctuary Fund to position itself to act when a suitable property for a bird and birdwatching sanctuary becomes available.

Q: What is the agenda?

A: The evening will feature live bidding, silent auctions, and opportunities to bid on smaller items using \$1 tickets. Past President Mike Miller will serve as auctioneer. Sanctuary committee members will explain the Sanctuary initiative. A dessert buffet will also be served.

Q: Where do the items come from?

A: From members like you. We're looking for gently used books, recordings, and optics. We're accepting feeders and nest boxes as well as birdbaths, artwork, and other interesting nature-related items.

Q: How do I donate something?

A: Items can be brought the night of the auction, or dropped off beforehand at Forest Park Nature Center. For larger items, contact Tracy Fox at 309-579-3264 to arrange for a pickup.

Q: Is my donation tax-deductible?

A: Yes, Peoria Audubon is an incorporated nonprofit organization in the State of Illinois.

Q: What about the desserts?

A: These, too, are donated by our members. LuAnn Elwood is coordinating the dessert table. Donations of cakes, pies, cookies, and pastries are all welcome and should be brought to the Nature Center the night of the auction. We need your help to equal last year's delectable display. Contact LuAnn at 309-685-8091 for additional information.

Last year's event raised over \$1350 for the Peoria Audubon Sanctuary Fund. An anonymous donor graciously pledged to match all funds raised up to \$2000. With the matching donation, the Sanctuary Fund gained \$2700 from the event. This year we have a goal to raise even more. Your generosity in donating items for auction, and your participation at the event will help us achieve this goal.

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday. Please make it a priority to attend and bring a friend.

Peoria Audubon Sanctuary Fund

The Sanctuary Committee continues to work toward the goal of establishing a Central Illinois sanctuary for birds and birdwatching. Membership support is critical to the effort. The September fund-raising letter brought numerous donations and helped raise our first-year balance to \$7000. Thanks to the following donors in the second half of 2001 who helped make this possible:

- Mrs. Margaret Adamson
- Ms. Betsy Banks-George
- Dr. Richard Bjorklund
- Mrs. Dorothy Brucker
- Mrs. Jacquelyn Clary
- Mrs. Esther Cohen
- Mr. and Mrs. Peter Fenner
- Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Flexsenhar
- Dr. and Mrs. Gerald Grawey
- Mrs. and Mrs. Donald Habecker
- Ms. Marianne Hahn
- Ms. Martha Herm
- Mrs. Janet Hinrichsen
- Mr. Roger Hoerr
- Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Holmes
- Mr. and Mrs. James Huber
- Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Jones
- Mrs. Claire Lewis
- Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Mattern
- Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Pierce
- Dr. and Mrs. Bert Princen
- Ms. Margaret Schmitt
- Mr. and Mrs. David Vaughan
- Ms. Emiko Yang

Conservation Notes

Contact Tracy Fox, 309-579-3264, tracyfox@mtco.com for more information.

National: Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

As of March 1st, the U.S. Senate debate on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge had not begun. Last month, nature photographer Ken Madsen visited Peoria with a firsthand account of the beauty of this pristine wilderness. At our February meeting, National Audubon Grassroots Coordinator Kristen Berry outlined the many threats drilling poses to the unique arctic ecosystem and presented a compelling case for making your voice heard. For detailed analysis of the issue, visit National Audubon's www.protectthearctic.com web site.

Illinois Senator Peter Fitzgerald remains undecided and will be a key vote on the drilling issue. If you oppose drilling in the refuge, **call the capital switchboard at 202-224-3121** and ask for Senator Fitzgerald's office. Make the call even if you have called or written before. Leave a message asking the Senator to oppose drilling in the refuge. It takes less than a minute, but it can make a world of difference.

Regional: Army Corps of Engineers Navigational Study

The contentious Army Corps of Engineers Upper Mississippi River Navigation Study (which includes the Illinois River) has been restructured based on recommendations by the National Academy of Sciences. The Corps will be presenting an overview of the new study in a series of open houses. The first one is in Peoria on March 12th. It is critical to show up and urge the Corps to include ecosystem restoration as a key component of the plan. Let them know that wildlife habitat has a strong constituency in Central Illinois.

State: Development of Plum Island

Plum Island, located in the middle of the Illinois River across from Starved Rock State Park, is an important area for wintering Bald Eagles. Its owner is currently seeking annexation from the village of Utica to build a variety of town homes. This is scaled back from earlier plans to develop a hotel-marina complex, but remains a serious threat to the eagles. The Department of Natural Resources and the local State Senator, Patrick Welch, both oppose the development. At Starved Rock Eagle Days, Peoria Audubon participated in a booth that generated over 850 postcards to Governor Ryan requesting that he permanently preserve the island. Write Governor Ryan at 207 State House, Springfield, Illinois 62706 and ask him to take action. Also consider attending the Native American Prayer Vigil the afternoon of March 24th to see the area under threat and learn more about the issue.

Show Up for the Birds

Tuesday, March 12

Army Corps of Engineers Navigational Study Forum Holiday Inn Brandywine

1-3 PM Open House

5-7 PM Presentation & Opportunity to Make Comments for the Record

7-9 PM Open House

Sunday, March 24

Preserve Plum Island for the Bald Eagles

Native American Prayer Vigil

Starved Rock State Park

A Midwest SOARRING event

Local: Chautauqua Planning Process

On February 27th, the Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge held an open house at Dickson Mounds to gather public comments on an early draft of its long-range plan. The plan includes numerous provisions to improve biodiversity on the refuge, setting goals to increase habitat for grassland, savannah, and wetland birds. It does not, however, specifically mention shorebirds. The plan emphasizes the need for more public access, but includes no specifics. If you have comments on the long-term goals for the refuge, or thoughts about how to improve public access, send them to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota, 55111-4056. When sending comments reference the Illinois River Comprehensive Conservation Plan and ask to be notified when the final plan becomes available.

www.peoriaaudubon.org

Peoria Audubon's listing of upcoming events and field trips, conservation issue fact sheets and sample letters, volunteer opportunities, and more.

audubonaction@audubon.org

National Audubon's biweekly communication on conservation issues. To sign up, send an e-mail with "Subscribe" as the subject. Each issue covers three or more issues with links to additional detail and forms for contacting elected officials and policymakers.

102nd Christmas Count Brings New Species, Highs

Central Illinois birders volunteered around 500 hours to make this year's three Christmas counts possible. The mild weather made things enjoyable for birders on the Peoria area count held December 15th, which racked up a healthy 75 species of birds. Rainy weather put a damper on the Chautaugua count held December 23rd, but the intrepid participants still located 85 species. By January 5th, colder weather and partially frozen water challenged the Chillicothe counters who managed to locate 64 species.

Bert Princen, Peoria count compiler, extends his thanks to the almost-record 26 participants - especially those who joined a Central Illinois count for the first time. The biggest news on the Peoria Count was the first appearance of Eurasian Tree Sparrows. Birders who regularly visit Banner Marsh and other Fulton County sites knew it was only a matter of time before this species crept north into the Peoria area. Record high counts, many attributable to unseasonably mild weather, include Pied-Billed Grebes,

Christma	o Count	Lagie De	lali	
	Peoria	Chaut	Chilli	
Adult	14	24	37	
Immature	4	19	30	
Unknown	5	0	47	
Total	23	43	114	

2001-2002 Christmas Bird Count Results

200. 2002 0.	iiiaiiiida D			
Common Name		Chautauqua		
Pied-Billed Grebe				
American White Pelican				
Double-Crested Cormorant				
Great Blue Heron				
Black-Crowned Night Heron				
Greater White-Fronted Goose				
Snow Goose				
Canada Goose				
Mute Swan				
Tundra Swan	0	23	0	23
Wood Duck				
Gadwall	14	84	89	89
American Wigeon	0	3	0	3
American Black Duck	5	170	28	170
Mallard	1206	21708	4306	21708
Northern Shoveler				
Northern Pintail				
Green-Winged Teal				
Canvasback				The state of the same
Ring-Necked Duck				
Lesser Scaup				
Long-Tailed Duck				
Bufflehead				
Common Goldeneye				
Hooded Merganser				
Common Merganser				
Red-Breasted Merganser				
Ruddy Duck				
Bald Eagle				
Northern Harrier				11 1167 VA 176
Sharp-Shinned Hawk				
Cooper's Hawk				
Red-Tailed Hawk				
Rough-Legged Hawk				
American Kestrel	43	25	22	43
Peregrine Falcon		0	0	7
Ring-Necked Pheasant				
Wild Turkey				
Northern Bobwhite				
American Coot				
Killdeer				
Common Snipe				000
Bonaparte's Gull				
Ring-Billed Gull				
Herring Gull				
Glaucous Gull				
Rock Dove				
Mourning Dove				
Eastern Screech Owl				
Great Horned Owl	0	4	2	4

2001-2002 Christmas Bird Count Results

Common Name		Chautauqua		
Barred Owl				
Belted Kingfisher				
Red-Headed Woodpecker				
Red-Bellied Woodpecker				84
Downy Woodpecker	91	44	93	93
Hairy Woodpecker				
Northern Flicker	10	20	15	20
Pileated Woodpecker	1	3	6	6
Blue Jay	130	102	72	130
American Crow	1018	1040	293	_ 1040
Horned Lark	10	7	42	42
Black-Capped Chickadee	294	111	235	294
Tufted Titmouse	74	62	76	76
Red-Breasted Nuthatch	1	10	0	10
White-Breasted Nuthatch	72	39	104	104
Brown Creeper				
Carolina Wren				
Golden-Crowned Kinglet				
Ruby-Crowned Kinglet				
Eastern Bluebird				
American Robin				7.000.000
Gray Catbird				
Northern Mockingbird				
European Starling				
Cedar Waxwing				
Yellow-Rumped Warbler				
American Tree Sparrow				
Field Sparrow				
Fox Sparrow				
Song Sparrow				
Swamp Sparrow			7700 cm	
White-Throated Sparrow				
White-Crowned Sparrow				
Dark-Eyed Junco				
Northern Cardinal				
Red-Winged Blackbird				
Eastern Meadowlark				
Common Grackle				
Brown-Headed Cowbird				
Purple Finch				
House Finch				
Red Crossbill				
Pine Siskin				
American Goldfinch	317	142	274	217
House Sparrow				
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	2	179	_ 000	170
Total Species				
Total Individuals				
Total Observers	26	21	150	26
Total Species Observed 2001/0	2 - All Counts		19	20
	An obuils			90

Green-Winged Teal, Wild Turkeys, Rock and Mourning Doves, Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds, Yellow-Rumped Warblers, White-Crowned Sparrows, and American Goldfinches.

Although the Chautaugua count circle didn't include any new species, there were an astounding number of high counts. This year, Pied-Billed Grebes, American White Pelicans, Greater White-Fronted Geese, Hooded Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks. Wild Turkeys, Bonaparte's and Ring-Billed Gulls, Eastern Bluebirds, and American Robins all reached record numbers. Nine of these ten high count species were lingering migrants. Interesting count week species included a Black-Crowned Night Heron and a Long-Tailed Duck (formerly known as an Oldsquaw). Compiler Richard Bjorklund thanks everyone who helped make the count such a success.

The Chillicothe count also included new high counts for Snow Geese, Gadwall, Common Mergansers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds, and House Finches. Compiler Tracy Fox thanks all who participated and all who scouted territories in advance. One scouting party located a Glaucous Gull, which added a new species for the count.

If you've never volunteered, think about joining us next year. Tentative dates are December 14 and 21, 2002 and January 4, 2003.

Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Rick Fox. 309-369-5330, rickfox@mtco.com to get involved.

Central Illinois Weekly River Bird Census:

March 1st marks four full seasons of data for the census. For year two, the effort has been scaled back to one route per week. This means each census route will be run once a month. It's fewer routes to cover, but volunteers are still needed. All that's required is the ability to identify Central Illinois river birds, a scope, and a two-hour commitment. The routes can be run any time from Friday morning to Monday evening on the weekend you choose.

Illinois River Birding Trail:

Following the November program on the Upper Mississippi River Birding trail, Peoria Audubon committed to help scope out a similar trail for the Illinois River. A packet outlining the information that needs to be collected is available and an informal brainstorming session will be scheduled next month. Join the effort and share your expertise on the best birding in Central Illinois.

Earth Day/Migratory Bird Day Outreach:

Peoria Audubon would like to be represented at both of these community events. The Earth Day celebration is tentatively planned for the afternoon of Sunday April 21st at Lakeview Park. Migratory Bird Day will be Saturday May 11th at Forest Park Nature Center.

At both events, volunteers are needed to staff an Audubon booth, lead bird walks, and more.

Farmdale Bird & Butterfly Inventory:

The Army Corps of Engineers is interested in inventorying bird and butterfly life at its Farmdale site in East Peoria. They also have an extensive bluebird trail in need of both maintenance and monitoring. This may be your opportunity to uncover a new "hot spot" in a relatively unexplored area.

2002 Eagle Count Results

	Adults	Immatures	Unknown	Total
Land Teams				
Henry to Peoria - East	48	23	21	92
Henry to Peoria - West	27	9	0	36
Peoria to Havana - East	53	43	5	101
Peoria to Havana - West	44	28	0	72
Boat Teams				
Lock & Dam to Banner	40	55	0	95
Banner to Havana	46	53	0	99
Havana to Beardstown	119	59	0	178
Total	377	270	26	673
Percentages	56%	40%	4%	

Planning Ahead

Bird-A-Thon

Sunday, April 29

Find a partner or two and locate as many species as you can between sun up and sun down. Results from all participating teams are combined, so every sighting counts in this annual fund-raiser.

Spring Bird Counts

Saturday, May 4

All counties can always use another set of eyes. Contact the coordinators directly to sign up.

Fulton:

Helen Gasdorf, 309-676-3384

Mason:

Dick Bjorklund, 309-968-6502

Peoria:

Mike Miller, 309-685-6705

Tazewell:

Tracy Fox, 309-579-3264

Woodford:

Brenda Garman, 309-923-7676

This year's count took place on January 26th. The weather was warm and sunny and most of the river was open. Normally, eagles are spotted sitting on the ice along the river channel. This year the eagles were more scattered. As organizer Marj Tattersall explains, "Even though we added a third boat team from Havana to Beardstown, we were not able to match last year's record of 685 eagles ... but it wasn't from a lack of trying." Thanks to Marj, and boat team organizer Mark Werner, for a great count and a wonderful opportunity to educate all of Central Illinois about the treasures right in our own backyard.

Welcome New Members

Our local brochures recently recruited thirteen new Peoria Audubon members:

- Michael & Stacy Anderson
- Merle Banks
- Ralph Beeler
- Marge Bjorklund
- Bruce Halverson
- Becky Hauser
- Charles Kinney

- Gordon Lofton
- John Mullen
- Sue Parker
- Lindsay Powers
- Sean Ross
- Dr. Harry Stone

Cooper Park Wetlands Protected

By Tom Lerczak

On October 30th, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission approved registration of the 55-acre Cooper Park Wetlands in East Peoria as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve. Cooper Park Wetlands, within Cooper Park, is located along the eastern shore of Lower Peoria Lake, along State Route 116. Cooper Park is owned by the Fondulac Park District.

There are now 64 registered Illinois Land and Water Reserves totaling 22,759 acres. Areas registered as Illinois Land and Water Reserves are protected from development under a voluntary conservation easement agreement involving the landowner, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Only areas meeting specific criteria are eligible to be registered as Illinois Land and Water Reserves. Cooper Park Wetlands not only has rare wetland communities such as shrub swamp and marsh, but it also provides habitat for the state and federally threatened decurrent false aster, a plant found only along the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois River Bottomlands Natural Division and in a few locations near St. Louis.

Cooper Park Wetlands is easily accessed by visitors at three entrances: the south entrance to Cooper Park, the middle entrance to Cooper Park, and just south of the Spindler Marina. A gravel trail and boardwalk guide visitors through the natural area. At one point, the boardwalk passes near a series of active beaver dams; the beavers themselves, however, may prove elusive. Multiple visits at different times of year are necessary to fully experience the range of natural biodiversity at this site. For more information about Cooper Park Wetlands Land and Water Reserve or the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, call Tom Lerczak at 309-543-2744.

Recruit a New Member

Take the time to invite a friend to join Peoria Audubon. Membership in the Peoria Audubon Society includes National Audubon membership, and an *Audubon* magazine subscription. There is strength in numbers and, together, we can act as an effective voice for birds and their conservation needs in Central Illinois.

Membership in Peoria Audubon includes membership in National Audubon and the Peoria Academy of Sciences.				
	Introductory	\$20		
	Regular/Renewal	\$35		
	Student/Senior	\$15		
	Local Program Donation	\$		
	Peoria Audubon Sanctuary Fund	\$		
	Make checks paya Peoria Audubon S			
Name:				
Address:	L			
City:	•			
St/Zip:				
Phone:				
E-mail:				
Peoria Audubon Chapter: G66				
Send your membership form to:				
Peoria Audubon Society c/o Greet Princen 677 East High Point Terrace Peoria, Illinois 61614 309-691-0519				

Over Four Tons ...

A total of 8,915 pounds of seed was sold in this year's bird seed sale. The \$2500 in seed orders generated a profit of \$661. The proceeds were split between Peoria Audubon and the Rock Island Trail Association. This annual fund-raiser owes its success to the efforts of sale coordinator Bert Princen, the generosity of Kelly Seed & Hardware in downtown Peoria, and all the volunteers who showed up to help distribute seed orders. These efforts are greatly appreciated. Also, thanks to all who purchased seed.

Crane Watch

Maury Brucker is interested in your Sandhill Crane sightings this spring. A network of viewers throughout the state is attempting to patch together a clearer picture of when and where the cranes come through. The "official" count date is **April 13th**. Keep an eye to the sky and take a quick count of any cranes you see. Contact Maury at 309-691-5213 with details on your sightings by Monday, April 15th.

Board Notes

- Thanks to past officers and board members whose terms ended in 2001: Mike Miller, President; Gary Garman, Vice President; Brenda Garman, Board Member; and Emiko Yang, Board Member.
- Special thanks to Greg Brown who left the board after serving over ten consecutive terms as Secretary. Greg, you will be missed.
- Special thanks to Greet Princen who has served over ten consecutive terms as Treasurer and will continue to do so in 2002.
- Thanks to the nominating committee for bringing five fresh faces onto the board. Welcome Vice President, John Mullen; Helen Gasdorf, Secretary; Mary Luan Borquist, Board Member; Joe Cordio, Board Member; and Nathan Watson, Board Member.
- Membership Chair Bert Princen has agreed to officially join the board as a voting member in 2002.
- Thanks to Rick Fox for submitting a C2000 grant application to expand the scope of Peoria Audubon's Central Illinois River Bird Census.
- Upcoming board meetings are Tuesday, March 19 and Tuesday, May 21 at 7 PM at the Nature Center.

Peoria Audubon Society 677 E. High Point Terrace Peoria IL 61614

Peoria Audubon

Officers

Rick Fox – President
John Mullen – Vice President
Helen Gasdorf – Secretary
Greet Princen – Treasurer
Tracy Fox – Conservation
Bert Princen – Membership

Board Members

Maury Brucker 2001/02 LuAnn Elwood 2001/02 Jim Parrott 2001/02 Mary Luan Borquist 2002/03 Joe Cordio 2002/03 Nathan Watson 2002/03 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NUMBER 875 PEORIA, ILLINOIS