

# Birds-eye View



Conserving  
bird habitat  
for over  
**75**  
years

Winter  
2008

Mark your calendars!  
Friday-Monday Feb. 15-18  
The Great Backyard Bird Count!

Newsletter of The Peoria Audubon Society . . . Chapter of National Audubon since 1981

Chapter of The Peoria Academy of Science since 1930

[www.peoriaaudubon.org](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org)

Contact the Peoria Audubon Society at [audubon@peoriaaudubon.org](mailto:audubon@peoriaaudubon.org)

## Audubon Calendar...

These are just a few of the upcoming events  
listed at [www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar)

Peoria Audubon meets at 7:00 on the second Wednesday of every month, September through May. It's a relaxed, friendly evening with an interesting presentation, followed by refreshments. Free and open to the public.

### February 13, 7:00 PM@ FPNC

#### Birding in Ecuador

A narrated video presentation

Escape winter as Dr. Princen shares with us highlights of his recent tropical birding trip. We'll experience the sights and sounds of Ecuador - home to over 1600 bird species! We'll see rainforest habitat and then travel up the Andes - to altitudes of 14,000 feet. We'll enjoy video of over 40 hummingbird species! For this event, Bert edited about 8 hours of video down to about 45 minutes of highlights.



### March 12, 7:00 PM@ FPNC

#### Nesting Habitat of Grassland Birds

James Herkert of  
The Nature Conservancy

James will focus on how habitat fragmentation has caused midwestern grassland bird declines.

### April 9, 7:00 PM@ FPNC

#### Hummingbirds! with Vern Kleen

Vern will share his experiences as a registered hummingbird bander, and will discuss the status of Illinois' hummingbirds.



## Field Trips & Events!

Saturday, Jan. 26

### Peoria Area Eagle Count

Peoria Audubon takes a census of the eagles between Henry and Havana along both sides of the Illinois River. Contact Bert Princen at 309-691-0519 to sign up.



Photo by Dennis Endicott  
01/05/08 Chillicothe CBC

### Sunday, January 27, 3:15 - 6 PM Winter Raptors at Banner Marsh

Pete has invited all members and their friends to carpool to Banner Marsh. If the Short-eared Owls show up, we'll stand in their midst as they swoop about at sunset, 'barking' as they hunt. We might also see eagles and harriers.

Meet at the **Bartonville McDonalds** (5600 S Washington at I-474) at 3:15 pm to carpool to Banner Marsh. We should be back to Bartonville around 6:00 pm. Expect riverfront wind chills and dress accordingly (and a thermos of hot beverage might be nice). Questions: e-mail [president@peoriaaudubon.org](mailto:president@peoriaaudubon.org)

### Saturday, March 8, 7-3, meet @ FPNC Birding Tour of the Illinois River

This 2nd Annual trip will take in some of the most renowned bird migration hotspots along the Illinois River. We will travel in a Park District van south along the river, stopping at **Spring Lake** and **Chautauqua**,

enjoy a catered lunch overlooking the **Dickson Mounds** complex, then proceed to one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the world, the Nature Conservancy's **Emiquon Preserve**. Then on to **Rice Lake** and **Banner Marsh**. Trip leaders: Maury Brucker and John Mullen. **Preregistration a must.** Call 686-3360 for more info and registration. Ages 14 & up. \$30 fee (lunch & transportation)

### Don't miss the waterfowl on their northern migration

Bert's annual spring bird-watching field trip to the wetlands near Canton is **April 5**. Call Bert at 691-0519 for details.



## A Note from our President



Greetings fellow birders! We are in the season of cold temperatures and you might think birding is not so "hot" this time of year. But our recent Christmas Bird Counts in Illinois often tally over 70 different species. Gulls, ducks, geese and other water birds can be seen as long as there is open water.

Bald Eagles visit our area in much greater numbers in December, January and February. Look for them in trees along the river, standing on river ice, or soaring nearby. If you can see the white head and tail (which means the individual is an adult) then you are getting a remarkable view!

Certain songbirds and finches are more numerous in our area in winter. Dark-eyed Juncos are plentiful, and I've already seen Snow Buntings and a Northern Shrike this winter. Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs can often be seen feeding along rural roads, especially on snowy days. The two crossbills, red- and white-winged, have been seen in central Illinois this winter. If you see any crossbills, please post your sighting on **Central Illinois Birding Forum** [www.groups.google.com/group/CILB](http://www.groups.google.com/group/CILB)

So, grab your binoculars, bundle up, and enjoy the benefits of winter birding!

Pete

Log onto [www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar) for details on all of these events!

## February 15-18: 11th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

During "Presidents' Day" weekend, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.



Because of the informal nature of this count, it's a **great opportunity for kids** to experience a bird count. Please help to **get the word out** by copying the enclosed poster and putting it up in your school, library, business, etc. Full-color posters can be downloaded from [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)



# 2007 Peoria Area Christmas Bird Count Summary

## Peoria Circle Count,

December 15 Compiler: Bert Princen

It snowed most of the day but there was no wind. Temperatures were mild (27 degrees F), with excellent birding.

Thanks to the 20 participants, and 3 feeder watchers.

We saw 75 species – high for the Peoria area.

We had several good sightings: 2 White Pelicans, 4 Ruddy Ducks, 1 Peregrine Falcon, 4 Lapland Longspurs, and 1 Rusty Blackbird. Also, the 31 Bald Eagles during a CBC in Peoria is a high. We sighted all 7 woodpecker species. It's also unusual that 45 Great Blue Herons were sighted.

You can see why the Peregrine Falcon likes to stay in Peoria: 991 Rock Pigeons and 2577 Starlings to play with.

## Chautauqua Circle Count

December 22 Compiler: Dick Bjorklund

Temperatures were mild, with overcast skies.

Thanks to the 16 participants.

We saw 87 species, which is rather low for Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, a rich birding area.

Unusual sightings: 1 White Pelican, 1 Common Loon. A high count of 99 Tundra Swans (all three swan species seen), 35 Eurasian Collared Doves, 93 Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

The primary objective of National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is to monitor the status and distribution of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere.

The count period is from December 14th to January 5th. When we combine these data with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, we begin to see a clearer picture of how the continent's bird populations have

changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The information is also vital for conservation. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

## Chillicothe Circle Count,

January 5 Compiler: Tracy Meints Fox

Warm weather and the presence of hunters made access to some riverfront areas difficult. Nonetheless counters found 13 species of swans, ducks and geese including a flyover Trumpeter Swan near the Marshall/Woodford County line, a Canvasback south of Chillicothe, and groups of 41 Lesser Scaup and 17 Hooded Mergansers near Spring Bay.

Raptor numbers seemed healthy with 54 Bald Eagles (35 adult and 19 immature), high counts for both Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks and an unusual Red-shouldered Hawk in Woodford County

Other notable sightings included a record high of 15 Brown Creepers (most from the bottomlands north of Chillicothe), a pair of Fox Sparrows and a group of 25 Snow Buntings near Lacon. High counts were also recorded for Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers

Areas of concern are the continued decline in Red-headed Woodpeckers and the complete absence of game birds (Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite). Fifteen Wild Turkeys were found during a scouting expedition near Spring Bay but none were actually seen on the day of the count. Additional misses included Snow Goose, Wood Duck, American Coot, Eastern Screech Owl, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow

Thanks to all 20 participants for another outstanding count – 67 species and 16,631 individual birds. Next year's count is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, January 3, 2009.

## There are two ways you can view the the data from these three circles:

After results from each of the three 15-mile diameter Peoria Area Circles are compiled, the compiler sends this data electronically to "National". The data is then reported by Circle at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc) (click on **Current Year's Results**)

PDFs showing results from our three local circles can be downloaded at [www.peoriaaudubon.org/bcs](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/bcs)





# CBC Chillicothe Circle

## A Beginner's Perspective

A personal account  
by Karen Solomon Dunn  
Photos by Dennis Endicott

As the day dawned, we stood on the riverbank at Chillicothe's Shore Acres Park.

After weeks of frigid weather, the balmy temperatures created a soft grey mist over the crackling ice floes. Ring-billed Gulls soared and dived. A raucous, carelessly-V-shaped flock of Canada Geese flew overhead. In the quiet shallow water near the shore, a Great Blue Heron waded. Dennis offered me his second-favorite binoculars (*Zeiss Victory Compacts—an excellent but pricey model that he was lucky to purchase used.*)

It took a few minutes to accustom my eyes to the superior optics and learn how to focus.

The sharply-focused image of that heron was absolutely mesmerizing! I was hooked!

I'd joined "National" (*Audubon Society*) a few years ago – simply because I revere Nature and because I'm concerned about what humans are doing to this planet. To quote John James Audubon: "A true conservationist is one who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children."

Audubon's mission is to "conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity." The state of bird diversity and numbers (*population trends*) is an important indicator of the quality of our environment.

As a new Audubon member, I was a self-described "bird-spectator" (*meaning that I was fascinated by the diversity, flight, and behaviors – even if I couldn't ID the species*). I have to admit I felt a bit daunted at membership meetings because I knew so little. What I did not yet understand was that Audubon's bird-savvy members are *happy to share their knowledge* with folks like me. In fact – this is one of the missions of Peoria Audubon.

Since then, I've learned about quite a few bird species – although I'm not a left-brained "classifier". Right-brainers like myself prefer to discover the *hows* and *whys* of these fascinating creatures. **I become personally acquainted with a species because I become intrigued.** For instance: I find out that the Black-Capped Chickadee hides its food (usually seeds) for times when food is scarce – and that these industrious birds can remember *thousands* of hiding places! (*I can't even remember where I put that can of garbanzo beans!*) And the more I discover about each species of bird, the more I want to know.

Back to my account of that balmy midwinter morning:

It was January 5 – the day of the Christmas Bird Count for the Chillicothe Circle (my first CBC.) In December, I'd emailed Tracy Fox, explaining that my bird ID skills were minimal but that I'd be happy to provide use of my CR-V to transport a team. Tracy is the Chillicothe Circle CBC coordinator. She divides the volunteers into teams – pairing novice with experienced birders – and maps out areas within the Circle for each team to cover. Oh, and she also invited all the volunteers (after eight hours in the field) to gather back at their home for one of her *famous gourmet meals!*

Those eight hours **flew** by on that warm Saturday. After a quick scan of our section of the river, and a stop for breakfast, we slowly drove toward Edelstein along country roads. Dennis listened for bird calls and we'd pull over and scan the countryside with our binoculars

when we heard a call or saw movement. In a few cases, we found public land and were able to walk around and get a better vantage point. Once Dennis identified the species – *and indicated to this novice how he ID'd that species* – we would count the number and record the sighting on the CBC form.



American Tree Sparrows

My favorite stops: Three Sisters Park and the riverfront south of Hamms Harbor. At Three Sisters, we walked around in a beautiful

pine forest (hoping to see owls). We happened upon a flock of Dark-Eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows celebrating the snow thaw by splashing in puddles and foraging in the exposed grass.

We headed back to the river in the afternoon, and found a spot to view Bald Eagles just south of Hamms Harbor. A homeowner invited us onto his riverfront lawn, and enthusiastically shared some of his recent experiences watching the eagles. As we were chatting, a Bald Eagle flew into a tree directly above our heads!



We also watched several eagles perched on chunks of ice in the river. One mature eagle maintained his balance as a barge passed by, then took flight to hunt for fish in the agitated water in its wake. (*If you want to share similar experiences, be sure to sign up for the Eagle Count on January 26 – you'll probably see some amazing things!*)

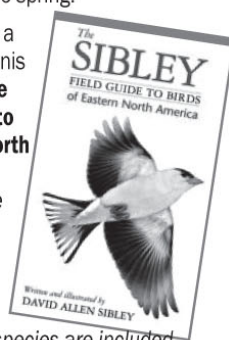


Some of the bird species that intrigued me most that day: Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, American Tree Sparrow, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, and Red-Tailed Hawk. I spent time that evening surfing Cornell's Bird Guide ([www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/)), checking out my new acquaintances. *I discovered more intriguing facts* – I can't wait to see the Red-Tailed Hawks'

spectacular airborne feats (*during their courtship dance*) in the spring!

I'm also purchasing a field guide that Dennis shared that day: **The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America** (ISBN 067945120X). The illustrations are detailed and the descriptions are comprehensive –

and most North American species are included.

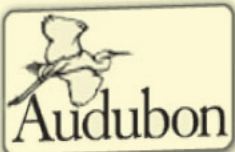


I was proud to be a part of this tremendous citizen science effort that now spans the entire Western Hemisphere. The data from this century-old count helps Audubon scientists focus on those birds and habitats that need our help most. Learn more at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc)



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## Conservation

### City Schedules January 23 Meeting: Economic Development Plans – consequences to the environment

by Jason Beverlin, PAS Conservation Chair

Craig Hullinger, Economic Development Director for City of Peoria, has brought to the attention of Peoria Audubon and other local environmental groups two potential economic developments in Peoria along the Illinois River.

One of the proposed developments is the Eagle View TIF and Site Plan. Planning for this 300-500 acre area in south Peoria calls for large industry on the majority of the site, but would include green space, as well as a barge canal.

The second proposed development is The Rivers Edge Redevelopment and The Green Edge Plan. This plan recommends constructing a street that would connect Water Street with Grand View Drive and would include green space, construction of islands along the west bank of the river near Constitution Gardens, and construction of several condominium-style homes.

**A presentation geared toward local environmental organizations has been scheduled for January 23 at 5:00, Room 420, Twin Towers at 456 Fulton Street.** PAS Board members will be in attendance, and will recommend a stance on this issue for Peoria Audubon, based on our findings.

Audubon members are encouraged to attend. Find out more about these proposals at <http://groups.google.com/group/peoriaeconomicdevelopmentbrochure/files>

In addition, The Greater Peoria Sanitary District has started the planning for a new treatment facility for the Village of Dunlap. Peoria Audubon has proposed that, as a part of their planning, they consider **wetland creation and access** — similar to Bloomington Normal's treatment facility (and the Ken Schroeder Nature Preserve.) Check for continuing coverage of this issue at [www.peoriaaudubon.org/conservation](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/conservation)



Audubon's Public Policy Office monitors local, national and international conservation issues. **Stay informed!** Get monthly updates via email. Sign up at [www.audubon.org/campaign](http://www.audubon.org/campaign)

### Mark your calendars!

Illinois Audubon's **Spring Gathering**  
April 18-20 @Decatur Conference Center  
& Hotel

## Spring into Decatur

A registration form, with complete listings of field trips and weekend events for this event is available for download at [www.illinoisaudubon.org](http://www.illinoisaudubon.org)



Slides and jpgs weren't the only creative endeavors shared at PAS's **January Potluck & slide/photo show**. Also attending was author and quilt artist Sue Van Wassenhove. Sue brought several of her *beautiful* and intricate wildlife quilts for us to enjoy. Birds and reptiles from the Everglades are also the subject of her poetry. A **booksigning** is scheduled for March 2 from 2-4 pm at Forest Park Nature Center.

