

Birds-eye View



Spring 2008

Mark your calendars!
Spring Bird Count
May 10th, 2008

Newsletter of The Peoria Audubon Society. . . Chapter of National Audubon since 1981
Chapter of The Peoria Academy of Science since 1930

www.peoriaaudubon.org

Contact the Peoria Audubon Society at audubon@peoriaaudubon.org

AUDUBON CALENDAR

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

These are just a few of the upcoming events listed at www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar

Sat., May 10, 2008, 7:00 AM
Spring Bird Count
Details on page 2

May 14, 2008, 7 PM FPNC

Creating a Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary in Harmony with Wastewater Treatment

The Monthly Audubon Meeting. Mike Callahan, former Director of Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District will provide an insight into the steps in creating the 188 acre Kenneth L. Schroeder Wildlife Sanctuary, 5 miles south of Bloomington. According to Ken, the facility which serves as a buffer from the waste reclamation facility, will be open to the public and provide hiking trails and an observation blind to view the wetlands. An additional 80 acres was just added and under development.

Sat., May 17, 2008, 7:30 AM

Migratory Bird Walk at Forest Park Nature Center

Search for spring migrants and resident birds of Forest Park with a guide from Peoria Audubon. Please bring your own binoculars or you may borrow a pair from Forest Park. All levels welcome; no experience required. Age: 10 & up Fee: Donations requested (Summer Bird walk scheduled on June 7th also).

Sun., May 18, 2008, 1:00 PM

Oak Bluff Savannah Field Trip

Maury Brucker will be leading a field trip to the 10 acre Oak Bluff Savannah that was recently restored with a grant with the Midwest Forester's Partnership. Maury has identified over 140 species at the property near Henry, IL. Meet at Forest Park Nature Center @ 1:00 PM to carpool to the savannah. Outing planned until 5PM?

Sat., Aug 16, 2008, 7:00 AM

Illinois River Birding Tour, Shorebird Migration & More

Catch the peak of shorebird migration at Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge and adjoining sites—This trip, led by Maury Brucker and John Mullen of Peoria Audubon Society and Forest Park Nature Center, includes transportation and a delicious lunch. Pre-registration a must, as this trip fills up fast. Call 309-686-3360 for more info and registration. Best for 12 and up. Fee: \$35/person, Forest Park Nature Center and/or Peoria Audubon Members receive a \$5 discount.

Sat., Aug. 23, '08, 9:00 AM - Noon

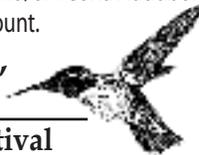
Hummingbird Festival

Vernon Kleen will demonstrate hummingbird banding and discuss the fascinating world of hummingbirds. "Adopt" one of these beautiful flyers. Free event is a come-as-you-please activity. Jointly sponsored by Forest Park Nature Center and Illinois Audubon. Fee: Donations appreciated

Sept. 10, 2008, 7 PM FPNC

Prairie Rivers Network

The Monthly Audubon Meeting. Brad Walker, River Restoration Coordinator, for the Prairie Rivers Network, will speak on their work of protecting the rivers and streams of Illinois to promote the lasting health and beauty of watershed communities. According to Brad, "In 2006 we expanded into the related issue of river restoration. We are specifically working to raise awareness and improve conditions for restoration activities to occur along the Upper Mississippi and Illinois River's area within Illinois."



A Note from our President



Many of you may not be aware that the Greater Peoria Sanitary District is considering building a sewage treatment facility on the north side of Peoria, likely in the Dunlap area. This came to our attention late in 2007.

Hopefully you saw an article on the front page of the Peoria Journal Star on Easter Sunday, March 23. If not, the article can be viewed at the following internet link http://pjstar.com/stories/032308/TRI_BG31NMJS.027.php

The article describes a field trip organized by Peoria Audubon to the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD). This location is a sewage treatment facility south of Bloomington off of Route 51. It is a special place, because our neighbor city to the east included a wetland and over 200 acres of "buffer" land which includes the wetland, the Little Kickapoo Creek, wooded areas and trails, and a viewing platform for waterfowl in the wetland. BNWRD was built because forward-thinking staff in Bloomington-Normal knew that in a decade or two, growth from the city sprawl would encroach on the area, and understood the benefits wetlands to water purification. Additional input came from John Wesley Powell Audubon members, and volunteer assistance in designing and developing the natural portion of the facility.

The intent of the field trip was to show how including a wetland as part of a sewage treatment facility could be accomplished, and discuss its challenges and benefits. It is our hope that Peoria would follow the lead of Bloomington. Several board members attended, plus Stan Browning (Executive Director of the Greater Peoria Sanitary District), and Clare Howard (the reporter from the Journal Star). The executive and retired directors of BNWRD, Bob Carter and Mike Callahan, hosted the event. We hope you support the conceptual idea, and will come learn more from Mike Callahan at our regular monthly membership meeting on May 14 at Forest Park Nature Center.

Pete

Log on to www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar for more details on all of these events.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER

contributed by John Mullen

Like many animals in the wild, the high-pitched wheezy song of the blue-gray gnatcatcher is usually the first clue one gets of the presence of this small, very active bird that takes some follow-up searching to locate amidst the tangled branches and vines that they hurriedly flit from one to another. The blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) is the most widespread member of its genus as well as the only member to inhabit the cold northern temperate region. It also is the only truly migratory gnatcatcher although some breed in Central America and thus are residents there. But, like other gnatcatchers, the blue-gray is a bundle of energy and a challenge to track through its constant hops, jumps and short flights.

As of this printing, blue-gray gnatcatchers have begun to arrive in the Peoria area, seeming to prefer bottomland forest and riparian woodlands although they can be found throughout the local tree covered river bluffs. These diminutive blueish gray birds resemble tiny mockinbirds and indeed mimic songs of other species of birds. They have a prominent white eye ring and long tail that makes up over 45% of their total length. They often fan their black tail showing diagnostic white edges. Breeding males possess a seasonal narrow black line over their bill extending over and behind eye.

These insectivores primarily inhabit broadleaved trees and shrubs with a strong association to the oak-hickory woodlands in central Illinois, nesting most frequently in oaks (Cornell nests records). Arriving in Central Illinois in mid April, these relatively early nesters will build a small cup of plant down and lichens held together with spider silk, lined with fine materials, on a horizontal branch of a tree. They are monogamous, at least per season, and the female lays 4-5 pale blue to bluish white eggs.

They are entertaining to watch, as they are in constant motion. They will hop and side-step along branches, assisting such movements with wing spreading and tail fanning. They will sometimes cling to tree trunks and rarely lite on the ground. Periodically they will hover flutter mothlike in appearance while gleaning insects from the lower sides of foliage.

Their body language is complex with territory defense consisting of the tail held in a variety of upright and fanned positions accompanied by aggressive calling. Chases and "fights" can be frequent in the breeding season and if an intruder does not initially flee, aerial fights may

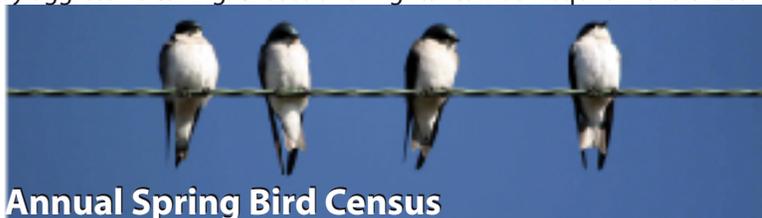
ensue with both birds fluttering breast to breast with bills snapping and the two rising in the air up to 60 feet above the other birds.

The population of this unique species seems to be relatively stable with the breeding range expanding to the north. This northern expansion seems to be a common occurrence in this day and age. Regardless of where they're found, take some time to study the habits of these wonderful little birds. It will not only be fascinating, but will help train your eyes and your search image as you attempt to follow the trail of the energetic blue-gray through the mosaic of woodlands and forest of this region.

Resource:
The Birds of North America Online, From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the American Ornithologists' Union. <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>



BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER



Annual Spring Bird Census

Saturday, May 10, is the date for this year's Spring Bird Census. Here in Peoria we held the very first one in 1962, and after a few years the event went statewide. Now, the organizers try hard to get census data in from all 102 Illinois counties. Peoria has always been counting birds in five counties, Peoria, Woodford, Tazewell, Mason and Fulton. Unless we can recruit many participants, that spreads us very thin. Each county should be broken up into at least four territories with their own teams. Even with two people to a team, that means that we need at least 40 observers to cover the whole 5-county area reasonably well.

As long as each team has one good birder in the group, others can serve well as spotters. In early May, the foliage on the trees can be out extensively, and little warblers, etc. can be hard to see. So, we need all the spotters we can get. The first two weeks in May can be the best during the year. It is often not all that difficult to find more than 100 species in a single day. One year Greet and I got 118 species, but that is stretching it. I am always happy when we break 100 species.

So, give us a call and offer your one Saturday for a good cause. Most of us learn every year again from this experience. Bring lunch, a good bird book, a pair of binoculars and we will team you up with some good birders. The team leaders are as follows:

Mike Miller, Peoria County, 686-3360 (work)

Matthew Winks, Woodford County, fluidfive@hotmail.com

Thad Edmonds, Tazewell County, 243-1854

Richard Bjorklund, Mason County, 968-6502

Helen Gasdorf, Fulton County, 676-3384

You can also contact me, and I will get you in a good group.

Bert Princen, 691-0519 or L.Princen@worldnet.att.net



BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER



PEORIA AUDUBON WEB SITE

Notes from our webmaster Dennis Endicott

We usually have 150-250 daily visits to our website. Our highest 1-day web activity volume was a little over 600 visits after publishing photos from the Peoria Hummingbird Festival.

It is interesting that the single most frequent web search that brings people to the Peoria Audubon site is to use "images.google.com" as the search engine and type in "geese" for the search. The Peoria Audubon Society website is on the first screen of images that this specialized GOOGLE search returns. Note that using "images.google.com" is a convenient way to find multiple images of an individual bird species. Typing "ruby-throated hummingbird" into the "images.google.com" search engine also brings you a Peoria Audubon webpage on the first screen of returned images.

Note that with modern browsers, you no longer need to type "www" in front of most web address. Just go to your browser, type "peoriaaudubon.org" then hit Enter.



MSD Fieldtrip on Saturday, April 5, 2008

contributed by Dennis Endicott & Bert Princen

Bert Princen of the Peoria Audubon Society, received special permission from the Chicago Metropolitan Sanitary District (MSD) to visit their private 20,000+ acre facility just west of Canton, IL.

The private wetlands were originally purchased by the Chicago MSD (a.k.a. Metropolitan Water Reclamation District) 40+ years ago with the intent of using the formerly strip mined land as a location to transport sludge from the Chicago area.

The original intent was to ship the sludge to the Canton facility for use as a fertilizer for farming. Over the years, the shipment of sludge was stopped. In the interim, the lakes, wetlands, and woodlands serves as a wildlife refuge for migrating water birds. Some farming operations are going on, but much of the acreage simultaneously functions as a refuge.

With a limit of only 20 birders for the trip (Bert indicated that he had to turn several late requests away) we ganged up into 5 vehicles for covering the distances between lakes and habitats. Dennis brought 5 FRS radios, so that each vehicle could listen to Bert's descriptions of what we were looking at. And, they could ask questions and communicate other sightings. Bert said that the more eyes, the better. Having the radios to communicate as a group was a big hit with the birding group.

18 people participated in the fieldtrip from 8:30 AM till 2:30 PM. On the premises they saw 55 species. They were as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe	Turkey Vulture	American Robin
Double-cr. Cormorant	Bald Eagle (1 imm.)	Northern Mockingbird ?
Great Blue Heron	Red-tailed Hawk	European Starling
Mute Swan	American Coot	Northern Cardinal
Canada Goose	Killdeer	American Tree Sparrow
Snow Goose (1)	Pectoral Sandpiper (2)	Chipping Sparrow
Wood Duck	Common Snipe	Vesper Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Ring-billed Gull	Song Sparrow
Mallard	Belted Kingfisher (1)	White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Red-headed Woodpecker (1)	Dark-eyed Junco
Gadwall	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Red-winged Blackbird
American Wigeon	Northern Flicker	Eastern Meadowlark
Canvasback	Eastern Phoebe	Western Meadowlark
Redhead	Tree Swallow	Common Grackle
Ring-necked Duck	Blue Jay	Brown-headed Cowbird
Lesser Scaup	American Crow (1)	House Finch
Bufflehead	Tufted Titmouse	House Sparrow
Common Merganser	Carolina Wren	Eurasian Tree Sparrow
Ruddy Duck		



BIRDERS ON MSD FIELD TRIP

More Pictures of the MSD Field Trip available on the web page



contributed by Pete Fenner

On March 26, 2008, National Audubon announced TogetherGreen, an innovative Audubon initiative, funded by Toyota. It is hoped that TogetherGreen will provide the inspiration; the leadership and the opportunities to help people everywhere take actions at home, in their communities and beyond to improve the health of the environment we share.

TogetherGreen is a Toyota contribution of \$20 million over four years which will allow Audubon to engage a larger and more diverse cross-section of conservation actions nationwide that will make a difference for the future of our environment. Specific investments will:

- * Fund Innovation Grants to expand outstanding on-the-ground conservation efforts already underway and to create new projects that address urgent environmental issues through innovative approaches and broad-based support.

- * Train and promote promising environmental leaders, Fellows, who can serve as role models, expert guides and organizers for engaging people in effective conservation action.

- * Support a national volunteer effort to engage American's in hands-on conservation.

- * Generate a Web site, toolkits, materials and outreach to inspire, empower and recognize conservation engagement.

- * Educate and involve the concerned young people of today who will become the environmental leaders of tomorrow.

- * Generate tangible and lasting results that can inspire future actions.

Exactly what this means for Peoria Audubon will become clearer in the future. Certainly, we are very interested in the possibility of utilizing available funds and volunteer resources.

Picture:
Zoe's adopted hummer on Mom Angie's hand at last year's Hummingbird Festival. A gentle tap from Vern Kleen, and the hummingbird is "launched" back into the air and flies away.



The Fuel-efficient Hummer

contributed by Roseanne Tomko

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are winging their way back to your feeder!

It is a folk tale that they fly back on the backs of Canada Geese. They make a remarkable trip from Central America across the Gulf of Mexico to Florida, about 525 miles, on their own power. The average humming bird weighs between 2.5 and 3.5 grams, a gram is equivalent to the weight of a standard paperclip. Holding three paperclips in your palm gives you an appreciation of this fuel efficient Hummer!

Check out the WEB pages listed to find for Spring 2008 migration progress.

THE JOURNEY NORTH HUMMINGBIRDS: www.learner.org/jnorth
HUMMINGBIRDS.NET: www.hummingbirds.net/map.html

For information about the many Hummingbird Festivals held throughout Illinois, or for specific questions about Hummingbirds, contact, Illinois Audubon Society or Vernon Kleen, 1825 Clearview Dr., Springfield, IL 62704. or kleen@insightbb.com



SPRING BIRD CENSUS

Inside:

When does your annual membership expire?

Check the date on your mailing label

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- Bert Princen - Membership/Field Trips
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- John Mullen - Board Member
- Deb Roe - Board Member
- Roseann Tomko - Board Member/Classroom sponsorship

Let everyone know you're a member. These window decals are free:



- one per member on a first come, first serve basis.

Log on to www.peoriaaudubon.com/free

Conservation



AUDUBON TIPS TO MAKE THEIR JOURNEYS SAFE ONES

SPRING IS MIGRATION TIME FOR 5 BILLION NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

New York, NY, April 3, 2008 - Each spring from March to June, birds of every kind – songbirds, raptors, shorebirds and others – make their way from their winter homes in the south to their summer breeding grounds in places as far north as the Arctic. Along the way they encounter a myriad of perils - storms, limited food supplies, and exhaustion. Compounding these natural threats are a myriad of additional ones created by humans, including the bright lights and tall structures of cities, prowling domestic pets and toxic lawns.

Fortunately, people can help ensure a safer journey for migrating birds. Backyards and parks, often key stopover points for many species, can become bird-friendly rest stops with a few simple steps. Audubon urges people to take the following actions this spring:

- Turn off lights at night: Birds become disoriented by artificial light, which often results in fatal collisions with buildings, homes, and other structures. To prevent this, turn off exterior and interior lights as much as possible each night during the peak migration period of April-June. Outfit exterior lights with top and side shields to direct the light downward, where it is needed. If you work in a high-rise, advocate for "lights out" during migration season.
- Prevent window collisions: Many birds strike windows after being startled off a feeder, seeing escape routes mirrored in reflective glass. To avoid this, reduce reflectivity with light-colored shades, blinds, or drapes; place netting or a screen in front of the window; or stick decals closely spaced to the outside of windows. Place bird feeders either within 3 feet or more than 30 feet of windows – at 3 feet birds do not have enough distance to reach a high speed and are therefore less likely to get injured in a collision; at more than 30 feet, they are less likely to be attracted to reflections in the window.
- Keep cats indoors: It is estimated that cats – domestic, stray, or feral – kill more than a billion birds each year. Ground feeding birds, such as cardinals and quail, as well as young, immature birds, are the most vulnerable. Keeping cats indoors helps keep the birds outdoors safe, and it also reduces risks to cats, especially from injuries and disease.
- Eliminate pesticides: U.S. households use 110 million pounds of pesticides in their homes and gardens annually, which kill several million birds each year when the birds ingest tainted insects, seeds and other food sources. Use the least toxic alternatives for combating pests.
- Keep feeders stocked and clean: Birds will need places to rest and refuel, so make sure that your yard includes native plants and your bird- feeders are well-stocked. Along with feeders and native plants, provide a source of fresh water for the thirsty travelers. Adding a drip to a bird bath or pool greatly increases its attractiveness to migratory birds as it adds noise and movement. Reduce the risk of spreading disease at feeders by regularly cleaning them with a nine-to-one water-bleach solution, or a dilute vinegar solution (three-to-one) or non-fragranced biodegradable soap.

For more information on how to keep birds safe, visit the Audubon At Home website at www.audubonathome.org (go to the "Keeping Wildlife Safe" link on the left-hand side of the page).

Audubon Advisory
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