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To learn more about the Illinois IBA program, check out the website at: www.habitatproject.org/birds.iba.html
Birding Tour of the Illinois River: Shorebird Migration and More. Sat., April 25, 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Catch the peak of shorebird migration at Emiquon and adjoining sites. Visit some of the best places in Illinois to see thousands of shorebirds that stop during their spectacular migration. Naturally, we’ll take in the great scenery and other early migrants as well. This trip, led by Maury Brucker and John Mullen of Peoria Audubon Society and Forest Park Nature Center, includes transportation in a Park District, 15-passenger van and a delicious lunch. Preregistration required. Register early as this trip fills up fast. To avoid a $5 registration fee, call the Peoria Park District at 686-3360 for more information and registration. Fee: $35

**Bluebird Success!**

Some of you may have read my letter one year ago describing a nesting failure I had at my residence in rural Germantown Hills. Last year, I had nailed a bluebird house to a tree in my backyard, and the bluebirds promptly gathered materials. I decided to build and place two houses for several days. They had abandoned the nest so I cleaned it out right away. We weren’t sure what had happened during that period, but the parents finally returned for mealworms and began carrying them off to the trees. It is mid-June now and we have 4 healthy juveniles, 3 of which have learned to feed themselves at the mealworm table. I’m sure the 4th will figure it out soon.

We'll now try to attract a single pair, not two. Then I sank galvanized pipes into concrete about 3’ below ground, allowing them to extend about 3’ above ground. And very importantly, I purchased 36’ stovepipe-shaped racoons baffles and hung them on the top of the poles, just below the potential bluebird homes. In early April, a pair of bluebirds began scoping the two locations and settled on one. Nesting material was carried into the house and it looked like we were in business! I monitored the nests like I was supposed to, and found eggs. Fortunately, none appeared to be cowbird eggs. We invested in mealworms, and the pair was happy to come to our backyard deck to feed them. And soon, they were ecto carrying them back to the nest; then we knew they had hatched. They fledged in late May, and seemed to disappear for several days. They had abandoned the nest so I cleaned it out right away. We weren’t sure what had happened during that period, but the parents finally returned for mealworms and began carrying them off to the trees. It is mid-June now and we have 4 healthy juveniles, 3 of which have learned to feed themselves at the mealworm table. I’m sure the 4th will figure it out soon.

And, the news gets better still. It appears that the parents may be attempting a 2nd nest. We’ve seen them carrying nesting material within the same territory before (at a time not nearby it. No matter what, I’m calling the project a success, but if a 2nd successful nesting occurs, I will have totally made up for last year’s mistakes!

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**Wild Warblers!**

By experimentally improving nesting success for some pairs of warblers but not others, the team has demonstrated that individual male and female Prothonotary Warblers decide whether to return to the same habitat patch the following year at a rate of 80%. Individuals producing one brood returned at a rate of 50%. Only 25% of those producing no offspring returned the next year. Although some people may refer to other people as having a “bird-brain,” this may be considered a compliment. Consider that warblers are smart enough to use their own nesting success on returning to a good site and to avoid returning to the bad ones. These “decision rules” lead to increased densities of warblers on good sites. The presence of many returning adult birds to a site may indicate to new birds that it is a good-quality breeding habitat; much in the same way that a crowded restaurant likely indicates to passers-by that the food is good.

The results of this initial study provided a link between behavioral ecology and conservation biology by showing the inter-connections between the habitat and warbler nesting success. This research indicates that by consolidating forests and managing hydropathy in forested wetlands (maintaining deep water during the breeding season), local populations of warblers will thrive and be highly productive.

This study also addressed questions from researchers and conservation practitioners who had wondered if the birds that did not return were dead or if they migrated to other locations. During the past 15 years, Dr. Hoover and his team banded >8,000 Prothonotary Warbler nestlings. In subsequent years, they searched for banded warblers to gather information on population dispersion. The team expanded their search to include other appropriate habitat, and have recruited hundreds of citizen birders between years. To date, over 500 warbler nestlings have returned to breed. The team expanded their search to include other appropriate habitat, and have recruited hundreds of citizen birders between years. To date, over 500 warbler nestlings have returned to breed.

The vast majority (>90%) of returning nestlings bred within 2 miles of where they fledged. Of the over 1,300 breeding adult warblers captured 12 - 25 miles away from the study area, most were previously banded. In short, birds that fledged in the Cache area returned to the Cache area.

The great resource management implications of these results are that local conservation efforts, which improve nesting success (e.g., land acquisition, restoration, consolidation of forests, managing water levels), will benefit local population dynamics and provide an even greater benefit to the species and the community.

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**Spectacular Spring Shorebird Migration**

By Maury Brucker

We had a great run of shorebird sightings in the Peoria area this spring. There were lots of flooded fields and river overflows. The best area I looked at during this time was the flooded fields north of Mosherville on Old Galena Road at Spillman Road. This is the best year for this site since Louise Augustine reported it 20 years ago when we had another wet spring. At the Galena Road site, we found 21 species of shorebirds in May. These were 3 species of Plovers and the 4 others were interns! Many sandpipers included Black-necked Stilt, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, White-rumped and Bairds Sandpipers. There were 2 Phalarope species both Wilson’s and Red-necked. In addition there were Cattle Egrets, Pipits, Franklin’s Gulls and Black Terns. Other birds found in nearby areas included Hudsonian Godwits, Common Terns, and Black Terns.
and may also have affected water level fluctuations. These factors appear to influence raccoon movements and rates of nest predation. “bird-brain,” this may be considered a compliment. Consider that may have increased raccoon densities (the primary nest predator), breeding season returned to the same habitat patch the following year at a rate of 80%. Only 25% of those producing no offspring returned the next year. During the past 15 years, Dr. Hoover and his team banded >8,000 Prothonotary Warbler nestlings. In subsequent years, they searched for banded warblers to gather information on population dispersion. The team expanded their search to include other appropriate habitats, up to 25 miles away from the primary study area. To date, over 500 warbler nestlings have returned to breed. The vast majority (>80%) of returning nestlings breed within 2 miles of where they fledged. Of the ~3,500 breeding adult warblers captured 12-32 miles away from the study area, one was previously banded. In short, birds that fledged in the Cache area returned to the Cache area. The great resource management implication of these results are that local conservation efforts, which improve nesting success (e.g., land acquisition, restoration, consolidation of forests, managing water levels), will benefit local population dynamics and provide an even greater benefit to the local bird community.

Birding Tour of the Illinois River: Shorebird Migration and More
Sat. Aug. 8, 2009, 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Catch the peak of shorebird migration at Emiquon and adjoining sites. Visit some of the best places in Illinois to see thousands of shorebirds that stop during their spectacular migration. Naturally, we’ll take in the great scenery and other early migrants as well. This trip, led by Maury Brucker and John Mullen of Peoria Audubon Society and Forest Park Nature Center, includes transportation in a Park District, 15-passenger van and a delicious lunch.

Preregistration required. Register early as this trip fills up fast. To avoid a disappointment, Forest Park Nature Center and Emiquon Prothonotary Warbler Members receive a $5 discount. Call Peoria Park District at 686-3360 for more info and registration.

Incidently, this may be considered a compliment. Consider that may have increased raccoon densities (the primary nest predator),

Some of you may remember I wrote an article approximately one year ago describing a nesting failure I had at my residence in rural Germantown Hills. Last year, I had nailed a bluebird house to a tree in my backyard, and the hatchlings and adults mysteriously disappeared. While the case is still pending, I highly suspect raccoons were the culprits.

I Illinois Audubon Fall Gathering
September 11 - 13, 2009, Mettawa, IL
Hosted by Lake/Cook Chapter
Registration Deadline is August 26
Spend the weekend birding along Lake Michigan as well as inland in many Lake County forest preserves. Registration packets available in the latest Cardinal News.

Check out www.lakecookaudubon.org or contact Rena Cohen at 847-831-0331 for more information.

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nesting materials back and forth over a bit of time nearby it. No matter what, I'm calling the project a success, but if a 2nd successful nesting occurs, I will have totally made up for last year's mistake.

Illinois Audubon Saw-Whet Owl and Whooping Crane Field Trip
October 10-12, 2009
This is an annual trip to see Saw-whet owls at Linwood Spring’s Research Station at Stevens Point, WI. The trip includes a “Birds in Art” exhibit at the Leigh-Yawkey Art Museum in Wausau, WI. We'll visit the bird banding station and observe banding of Saw-whet Owls, and visit a Necheled Wildlife Refuge to see the Whooping Cranes. For more information contact: Thomas May at 618-475-2790.

This study also helped address questions from researchers and conservation practitioners who had wondered if the birds that did not return were dead or if they migrated to other locations. During the past 15 years, Dr. Hoover and his team banded >8,000 Prothonotary Warbler nestlings. In subsequent years, they searched for banded warblers to gather information on population dispersion. They expanded their search to include other appropriate habitats, up to 25 miles away from the primary study area. To date, over 500 warbler nestlings have returned to breed. The vast majority (80%) of returning nestlings breed within 2 miles of where they fledged. Of the ~3,500 breeding adult warblers captured 12-32 miles away from the study area, one was previously banded. In short, birds that fledged in the Cache area returned to the Cache area.

The great resource management implication of these results are that local conservation efforts, which improve nesting success (e.g., land acquisition, restoration, consolidation of forests, managing water levels), will benefit local population dynamics and provide an even greater benefit to the local bird community.

The results of this initial study provided a link between behavioral ecology and conservation biology by showing the inter-connections between the habitat and the behavior of the warblers. Habitat fragmentation and the degradation of bottomland forest ecosystems may have increased raccoon densities (the primary nest predator), and may also have affected water-level fluctuations. These factors appear to influence raccoon movements and rates of nest predation. Thus, the nesting success of the Prothonotary Warblers is influenced by the suburban and rural environments of their habitats.

The research indicates that by consolidating forests and managing hydrology in forested wetlands (maintaining deep water during the breeding season), local populations of warblers will thrive and be highly productive.

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- Dennis Endicott, with additional input from Dr. Jeff Hoover, Illinois Natural History Survey

May Meeting Recap
by Maury Brucker

Personal conservation was the topic as Bud Griebes highlighted 4 areas of his conservation efforts since being the mayor of Peoria.

Habitat and wildlife were the focus of the restoration of approximately 400 acres of land that he owns just north of Rice Lake Fish and Wildlife Area, the property runs from the river to the bluff top where he has built a house. Most of the effort was converting marginal farmland to wetlands and planting lots of trees.

Soil conservation to reduce the amount of silt getting into the Illinois River was also a focus of his conservation efforts. This coincides with the current news that the Corps has now started building islands in lower Peoria River Lake after 20 years of planning to mitigate silt accumulation there.

New energy sources was another part of Griebes’ talk. The Mayor reported that just that day, a windmill had been completed at his house on the bluff.

Griebes also discussed his volunteer activities with the Nature Conservancy and a project in which he invested in mealworms, and the pair was happy to come to the backyard deck roof to feed them. And soon, they were ecstatic, carrying them back to the nest; then we knew they had hatched. They fledged in late May, and seemed to disappear for several days. They had abandoned the nest so I cleaned it out right away. We weren’t sure what had happened during that period, but the parents finally returned for mealworms and began carrying them off to the trees. It is mid-June now and we have 4 healthy juveniles, 3 of which have learned to feed themselves at the mealworm table. I’m sure the 4th will figure it out soon.

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More Bird Books For Sale
by Maury Brucker

After completing the sale last May of a box of books from the Louise Augustine estate, we have received another nice donation of books. Don Art donated 30 newer books to Peoria Audubon with the proceeds to go to our operating fund. We will be selling these books in a similar way to the last books. We will offer them first to our members at the beginning of the membership meeting in Sept. They will be priced below the Amazon price or similar books in used condition without any shipping charge. We plan to post the prices on peaouadb.org around the time of the meeting.

Come a little early to the Sept. meeting to check out the great books!

Summer Bird Sightings
by Maury Brucker

In the Peoria area, unusual birds continue to be seen, probably because of the very wet spring.

Black-necked Stils are still present leading to the possibility of their nesting here. A Mute Swan, a non-breeding bird at tillage, has nested in private wetland, a pair was present around the middle of June after several pairs stayed there the last half of May. Reports of these birds were also made in Lee, Putnam and Fulton counties. A pair of Common Moorhens with chicks were seen at the Double T Fish and Wildlife area in Fulton County. This species has recently been added to the endangered list in Illinois, with this being only the second sighting for Peoria. All of this work and Fulton Counties, we have seen or heard Least Bitterns three time with up to 3 birds calling the middle of July.

If you see rare birds, contact Maury Brucker at 695-5213.
A Global Currency for Bird Conservation

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