

# Bird's-eye View



Conserving  
bird habitat  
for over  
**80**  
years

## FEB. 2011

Mark your calendars!  
**BIRDING FIELD TRIP**  
**SAT., MARCH 5, 2011**

**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)

Peoria Audubon meets at 7:00 PM on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May at the Forest Park Nature Center (FPNC). It's 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](http://www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar)

**Wed., Feb. 9th, 2011 7 PM**

### Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Michael Reuter, Executive Director of the Great Rivers Partnership for The Nature Conservancy, will present "Thinking Like A Great River: From Sites to Systems on the Mississippi River".

Michael will discuss developing a systems approach to sustainable management of the Mississippi River, and sharing expertise globally to support sustainable management of other great rivers.

**Feb. 18-21, 2011**

### The Great Backyard Bird Count

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site. A link to the GBBC site is on the calendar page our website.

**Sat., Mar. 5, 2011, 7AM - 4 PM**

### Field Trip - Birding the Illinois River

More information inside this newsletter. Pre-registration required Call Forest Park Nature Center @ 309-686-3360 for info and to register. Fee: \$35/person, Nature Center and Peoria Audubon Members' discount price \$30/person. Meet at FPNC @ 7:00 AM, Return by 4:00 PM

**Wed., Mar. 9th, 2011, 7 PM**

### Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

We will be showing the film: **Opposable Chums: Guts & Glory at the World Series of Birding.** This documentary won numerous awards by showcasing the world of "Competitive Bird Watching." The film includes footage of several famous naturalists and birdwatchers. One reviewer claimed, "Equal parts scavenger hunt, science expedition, and endurance test...." as teams go out to find and count the greatest number of bird species in 24 hours. Free Attendance.

**Wed., Apr. 13, 2011, 7PM**

### Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Native Prairie Management with the Prairie Dawgs. Doug Franks of the local volunteer group known as The Jubilee Prairie Dawgs will talk about prairie restoration in Central Illinois. He will describe controlled burns, reseeding, and other aspects of prairie restoration. One of the properties that Doug and the Prairie Dawgs manage is owned by the Peoria Audubon Society. Anyone with an interest in what it takes to manage a native prairie.

**Sat., Apr. 23, 2011, 7:30 AM - 3 PM**

### Birding Field Trip - MSWRD Wetlands

Thad Edmonds will lead a spring birding trip to the 15,000-acre Chicago MSWRD wetlands, just southwest of Canton, IL. Goal is to gather some data and assist in the effort to determine the effect of the oil spill on wintering grounds of waterfowl by assessing the impact on this very important migration flyway stop. Bring your lunch. Advanced reservations are required preferably prior to April 2. Contact Thad Edmonds at 309-243-1854 to make your reservation.

**Sat., May 7, 2011**

### Illinois Spring Bird Count

Statewide bird count. This bird count consists of volunteers conducting bird censuses in all 102 counties in Illinois. The participants record all birds seen or heard, along with the number of hours they spend "owling" (pre-dawn hours), the number of hours spent looking for birds during the day, the number of miles driven in a car, and the number of miles walked. To volunteer for Peoria County, contact: Mike Miller (309) 681-2858. Volunteers are also needed for Fulton, Mason, Tazewell, and Woodford counties.

**Wed., May 11, 2011, 7 PM**

### Monthly Membership Meeting at FPNC

Brian "Fox" Ellis of Fox Tales International will provide an educational encounter with the earth's wildest places. Through the ancient art of storytelling, "Fox" will leave you inspired as he becomes the persona of "John James Audubon," celebrating the 200th anniversary of his arrival in Kentucky.

**May 13-15, 2011**

### Illinois Audubon Spring Gathering

Hosted by McHenry Co. Audubon Society, Crystal Lake, Illinois. More information coming soon.

## A Note from our President

### Reflections on the history of Peoria Audubon Society

by Dennis Endicott

Starting off a new year provided me with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the history and purpose of the Peoria Audubon Society. At a recent board meeting, Greet Princen, our long-time Treasurer of more than 35 years, provided me with a stack of Peoria Audubon newsletters – some going back as far as 1993.

With a stack of our rich history in my hands, I couldn't resist the urge to (1) scan the old documents; (2) create a single, downloadable file for each newsletter; and (3) upload the entire stack of 40 or so newsletters to our website. Now anyone can go to "<http://www.peoriaaudubon.org>", click the button for "About PAS" and peruse through an archive of old newsletters.

Even with a few missing newsletters, the documents stand as reminders of our historic purpose: "Our mission is to promote birding through education, nature appreciation, habitat preservation and fellowship." With last year's acquisition and ownership of a small plot of prairie in Peoria County, our Board is continuing to work toward creating a sustainable local wetland sanctuary. With field trips and membership meetings at the Forest Park Nature Center, Peoria Audubon continues the rich tradition of promoting birding, appreciation of nature, and conservation through a generous dose of fellowship.

Perusing through the archives leaves one with a very deep and humbling appreciation of this heritage and the work by other volunteers who came before us.

Starting with a group of eleven science teachers, back in 1930, the Peoria Academy of Sciences was formed. The next year, the organization created eight sections, each emphasizing a different scientific discipline. The ornithological



FPNC = Forest Park Nature Center, 5809 N. Forest Park Drive, Peoria Heights

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section became the Peoria Audubon Society.

And to be consistent with our chartered purpose of promoting conservation and preservation of critical habitat, in 1981, the Peoria Audubon Society elected to become an active chapter of the National Audubon Society. Later on, Peoria Audubon also became an affiliate chapter with the Illinois Audubon Society ("Helping to preserve the Flora and Fauna of Illinois since 1987"). Recently, Peoria Audubon became a member of the Bird Conservation Network "<http://www.bcnbirds.org>", which is a coalition of organizations with an interest in the conservation of birds in NE Illinois, Southern Wisconsin and NW Indiana.

I feel very humbled by efforts of the earlier Audubon members who have worked to create the foundation for the efforts that we continue today.



The Peoria Co. CBC was held on Saturday, Dec 18, 2010 and had 19 participants, sighting 74 species. According to Thad Edmonds, the Peoria Count Compiler, "I think the surprises were a Turkey Vulture, a Double-crested Cormorant, and 2362 Rock Pigeons."

The Chautauqua count was held on Dec. 23, 2010 by Richard Bjorkland. Bjorkland reported 85 species, 37,220 individuals for the Chautauqua count circle.

The Chillicothe CBC was on Jan. 2, 2011. Tracy Fox, Chillicothe Count Compiler reported the following:

"Nothing exceptional to report on this year's Chillicothe CBC: no new species, exceptional high counts or big misses. What looked like it could be a miserable day, with freezing temperatures and high winds, turned out to be a nice day to be out looking for birds.

Thanks to all who got up early and helped out ... despite the lack of rarities and big numbers, these efforts are still critical for tracking the health of our over-wintering Central Illinois birds.

Together, 11 birders in 7 parties found 8910 birds of 67 species. Ring-necked ducks are infrequent on the Chillicothe CBC, but this year a group of 10, a high for the count, was spotted off Spring Bay.

I was also pleased to see four of the seven teams saw Red-headed Woodpeckers but the overall count of 11 was still pretty low. The high counts for Chillicothe were in 1993 and 1999 when 40 Redheaded Woodpeckers were seen. This reinforces my perception that these birds were far more plentiful 15 years ago.

In other woodpecker news, three of the seven teams reported Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers which may be having a mini-invasion this year as several bird feeding friends have mentioned seeing them as well. The four Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers sighted tie 2009 for the high count record.

Misses (birds seen on at least 10 previous counts since 1992) included Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red-winged Blackbird."



Join us for Peoria Audubon's next birding trip. The trip will take us to the migratory hotspots of the Illinois River Valley. The areas visited will depend upon scouting reports shortly before the trip. Typical locations include Spring Lake, Chautauqua, Emiquon and Rice Lake. The timing of the trip should coincide with peak spring migration.

Participants in last year's trip witnessed over 40,000 snow geese in migration. Field trip will be hosted by experienced birders Mike Miller and Maury Brucker.

Trip includes transportation in Park District Van, snacks, beverages and a box lunch. Spotting scopes and field guides will be available along with experts to help identify the birds. Attendees are encouraged to bring binoculars. The trips are great fun for both experienced and novice birders.

Pre-registration is required. Call Forest Park Nature Center at 309-685-3360 for more information and to register. Fee: \$35 per person, Nature Center and Peoria Audubon members' discount price \$30 per person. Meet at FPNC at 7:00 AM, return anticipated by 4:00 PM.

## 2010 Peoria CBC: Count Details

Snow Goose	0	Red-Shouldered Hawk	0	Brown Creeper	4
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	Red-Tailed Hawk	56	Carolina Wren	11
Cackling Goose	21	Rough-legged Hawk	2	Winter Wren	0
Canada Goose	2922	American Kestrel	9	Eastern Bluebird	19
Mute Swan	2	American Coot	3	American Robin	371
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Ring-Billed Gull	511	European Starling	1631
Gadwall	4	Herring Gull	9	Cedar Waxwing	29
American Black Duck	0	Wilson's Snipe	1	American Tree Sparrow	498
Mallard	262	Rock Pigeon	2362	Savannah Sparrow	1
Northern Shoveler	4	Mourning Dove	207	Song Sparrow	25
Canvasback	1	Great Horned Owl	2	Swamp Sparrow	3
Ring-necked Duck	3	Barred Owl	2	White-Throated Sparrow	46
Lesser Scaup	5	Belted Kingfisher	3	White-crowned Sparrow	3
Bufflehead	2	Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Dark-Eyed Junco	551
Common Goldeneye	196	Red-bellied Woodpecker	55	Snow Bunting	0
Ruddy Ducks	12	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	Northern Cardinal	230
Hooded Merganser	2	Downy Woodpecker	66	Red-Winged Blackbird	20
Common Merganser	34	Hairy Woodpecker	12	Common Grackle	2
Wild Turkey	58	Northern Flicker	19	Brown-Headed Cowbird	283
Northern Bobwhite	6	Pileated Woodpecker	4	Purple Finch	1
Double Crested Cormorant	1	Blue Jay	139	House Finch	51
Turkey Vulture	1	American Crow	390	Pine Siskin	4
Great Blue Heron	23	Horned Lark	136	American Goldfinch	91
Bald Eagle	75	Black-Capped Chickadee	234	House Sparrow	401
Northern Harrier	1	Tufted Titmouse	60	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	9
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	4	Red-Breasted Nuthatch	9		
Cooper's Hawk	6	White-Breasted Nuthatch	89		
				<b>Species Counted:</b>	<b>74</b>
				<b>Total Individuals:</b>	<b>12,316</b>

Details of the local results are available on our website at: <http://www.peoriaaudon.org/bcs.htm>

The national compilation is also available online at: [http://www.cbc.audubon.org/cbcurrent/current\\_table.html](http://www.cbc.audubon.org/cbcurrent/current_table.html)

## Opposable Chums

Guts: Glory  
at the World Series  
of Birding



## A Nature Documentary Comedy ???

Competitive birdwatching...may sound like an oxymoron to you, but it makes perfect sense to the participants of The World Series of Birding, who convene for one day each spring to see which of the

more than 120 international teams can identify the most bird species in 24 hours. Not one second later.

- The contest goes from midnight to midnight.
- The playing field is the state of New Jersey .
- Any vehicle except aircraft may be used.
- All birds counted must be alive and unrestrained.
- Teams may begin the event anywhere in the state, and follow any route they devise, BUT-
- Each team must hand in its totals at the Finish Line by midnight.

Equal parts scavenger hunt, science expedition, and endurance test, The World Series of Birding is also a fundraiser, generating millions of dollars for conservation. The more bird species tallied, the more money raised. Past participants have included some of the most renowned birders in the world, such as Roger Tory Peterson, David Allen Sibley, Kenn Kaufman, and Pete Dunne.

- One team mounts a paramilitary operation replete with infrared and GPS devices.
- Another team does the event on foot, jogging almost 50 miles.
- After scouting for weeks, one team has the entire 24 hours planned to the minute.
- A Seniors team counts only the birds that fly by the bench on which it sits all day.

"Opposable Chums" takes you along for the ride, with all of its competitiveness, camaraderie, and caffeine. In doing so, the film may be very first nature documentary comedy!

Please join us on March 9 at 7 pm at Forest Park Nature Center during the general membership meeting for a special screening of this film!

Source: [http://www.opposablechums.com/about\\_the\\_film.html](http://www.opposablechums.com/about_the_film.html)

## GOLDEN EAGLE

by Maury Brucker

With all the Bald Eagles we now have wintering along the Illinois River and in the Peoria area, we very rarely see a Golden Eagle. This is from a totally separate eagle family and it inhabits mountains and dry plateaus. The few Golden Eagles we see are most likely vagrants from the western US although these same eagles are found in Siberia, Scandinavia and southern Europe.

Adult male and female Golden Eagles are all dark with small heads and beaks. Immatures have distinctive white patches on the wings and rump; see your field guides for these markings.

On a birding trip to Alberta, Canada, Emiko and I were treated to an eagle counting sit. Most of the eagles there were Golden Eagles coming through one pass in the mountains south of Banff. Counting all daylight hours for seven months in the spring and fall, they totaled up to 7,000 Golden Eagles a year.

Last year I saw my first Golden eagle in Illinois after looking for 20 years. I looked over many, many immature Bald Eagles before finding one.



John James Audubon's depiction of a Golden Eagle



Melissa Sauder is looking for help with the following items:

- Possible Guest Speaker and 1-2 Guides for a beginning birding class to be held on Friday, April 22nd. (Please contact ASAP if available)
- Reestablishing Bluebird Box Routes  
Assist with monitoring routes, record keeping, data collection, observations, and maintenance to develop a consistent yearly record.
- Join our Wing Watchers Birding Club! Starting this Spring, we will be establishing a group of birders who meet quarterly to divide and conquer the park to maintain a record of what species are at the park. We will meet in February, May, August, and November or December.
- Maintenance of the Hummingbird Feeders
- Assist in the development and implementation of our First Annual International Migratory Bird Day Event (Will be held on Saturday, May 14th). Since it is our first year...the possibilities are endless! We plan on including 'All Things with Wings', so all if you have an interest in butterflies, moths, dragonflies, etc. and have an interest in developing a program, leading a hike, giving a demonstration or any other thoughts, please let us know!
- Assist in the care of Education Department's Raptors

Please contact Melissa at: [msauder@wildlifeprairiestatepark.org](mailto:msauder@wildlifeprairiestatepark.org) (309) 676-0998 ext. 6756 for any additional information

## February is National Bird-Feeding Month!

The National Bird-Feeding Society (NBFS) is pleased to announce that February is National Bird-Feeding Month! The theme for 2011 is "Most Wanted - America's Top Ten Backyard Birds." Throughout the month, the NBFS will highlight the joys of bird feeding by providing tips and techniques to create a successful bird feeding and watching experience, and attract America's top ten birds.

While many of the top ten birds can be found year round, others may only visit during spring and fall migration or during the breeding or wintering season. By providing bird seed and bird feeders year round, offering alternative bird foods and water, putting up bird houses, and making your yard safe for birds, you can enjoy America's most wanted backyard birds.

The Top Ten Backyard Birds east of the Rocky Mountains are the American Goldfinch, Chickadee (Black-capped/Carolina), Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpecker, House Finch, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch.

Whether you live in a rural, suburban or urban environment, there are always birds that can be attracted to your yard. Having the right combination of food and feeders is the key to a successful bird feeding experience.

National Bird-Feeding Month was established in 1994. The NBFS is the proud host of National Bird-Feeding Month, and helps make the backyard bird feeding and watching hobby better for people and wild birds. The NBFS accomplishes its mission by connecting hobbyists with education and research about backyard bird feeding.

For more information, visit the National Bird-Feeding Month page or please contact the National Bird-Feeding Society at 1-866-945-3247 or [info@birdfeeding.org](mailto:info@birdfeeding.org).

## Volunteer Opportunities for Birders at Wildlife Prairie State Park

[birdfeeding.org](http://birdfeeding.org)



Inside: 11th Annual Christmas Count Results

When does your annual membership expire?

Check the date on your mailing label

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Peoria Audubon Board

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- Mike Miller - Vice President/Program Chair
- Greet Princen - Treasurer
- Holli Cook - Secretary
- Maury Brucker - Conservation Chair
- Joe Van Wassenhove - Membership Chair / Board Member
- Carol Borders - Education Chair
- Pete Fenner - Board Member
- Deb Roe - Board Member / Newsletter Editor
- Jim Miller - Board Member
- Adam Wallenfang - Board Member
- Susie Grana - Board Member

Conservation

Biodiversity of Birds and Habitat

A few words from our recently elected Conservation chair:

As your new Peoria Audubon Conservation Chairperson, I want to share with you my perspective of our conservation role. Over the last 50 years, I have seen continuing loss of bird habitat and fewer native species in our area. In our bird counts and other scientific studies, we try to monitor these changes in the less common bird species. For us the term conservation means seeking opportunities to stem the decline in less common bird species. This often means protecting the habitat needed by these species. We are seeing some recent improvements in wetland habitats at Hennepin Hopper in Putnam county and the Emiquon project near Havana. Peoria Audubon is trying to establish a shorebird habitat project in our area as this habitat is in short supply here during migration. The Illinois Audubon, an affiliated group, is working with IDNR to protect grassland habitat at Prairie Ridge state natural area near Effingham, Illinois. Another example of protecting biodiversity locally is our group protecting tall grass prairie plants by taking on the stewardship of the 6 acre Brimfield Railroad Prairie Nature Preserve. Also, we always encourage individual efforts to help with habitat.

Although the Peoria Audubon discusses many ideas for conservation opportunities, we still welcome new ideas for group efforts. Because we have limited resources, we must be very selective on the projects to be pursued. Should the board decide to focus on a new idea, be prepared to help with the effort to pursue the idea.

Maury Brucker



solitary and Pectoral sandpipers



Black-necked stilts south of Havana

photos by D. Endicott