

Bird's-eye View



Conserving
bird habitat
for over
80
years

Winter
2017

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
WATERFOWL TRIP
SATURDAY, MARCH 4

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

These are some of the upcoming events listed at

www.peoriaaudubon.org/calendar

Please join us for our monthly meetings at Forest Park Nature Center. Between the months of September and May, we meet the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

**Saturday, March 4, 7:00 AM- 4:00 PM- Birding the Illinois River-
Waterfowl Trip**

Join us as we hit hotspots along the Illinois River in search of migrating waterfowl. This trip also includes special access to an area of Emiquon closed to the public. Transportation, snacks, and lunch are included in the \$40 per person fee, with a \$5 discount to Nature Center and Peoria Audubon members. Call Forest Park Nature Center at (309) 686-3360 for more information. Pre-registration is required. This trip is recommended for ages 12 and up.

**Wednesday, March 8, 7:00 PM- Membership Meeting- Pete Fonner:
eBird, the Mobile Application**

Peoria Audubon's own Pete Fenner will discuss eBird and why it is an essential birding tool. The talk will focus on the mobile application. Pete requests that interested members download the free eBird application in advance and bring mobile phones to the meeting where he will answer questions.

**Wednesday, April 12, 7:00 PM- Membership Meeting- Nesting Bird
Behavior in Spring**

Jim Parrott from the local Wild Birds Unlimited will be on hand to discuss nesting bird behavior in spring and answer lots of questions.

**Wednesday, May 10, 7:00 PM- Membership Meeting- Peru: Its Birds,
Sites, and Ancient History**

Vern Kleen, retired ornithologist and Past President of the Inland Bird Banding Association, will be with us to share his experience and expertise as a birding tour leader in Peru.

Notes from our President

Dennis Endicott

Welcome to a new year of discovery and a new year of challenges. Peoria Audubon Society remains committed to our mission of promoting conservation, recreation, and education at a local level. We continue to move forward (although at times it seems like a snail's pace) toward establishing a local wildlife sanctuary. Although we have encountered "hiccups," progress is slow.

On another topic, have you ever taken a photo of a bird to help identify the species? There is now an app to do just this! It is the Merlin Photo ID Tool. This is a mobile application that was developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This app uses image recognition software in the cloud at Cornell to identify a bird species. It is free for both IOS and Android devices. What is more amazing is that the Audubon Birds app, another very good electronic field guide, is also free. Both of these apps have hundreds of photos and recorded bird calls. Both of these are full, electronic field guides. I can't believe that they are being offered FREE!

I've used the Audubon and other electronic field guides for the last 6 years and can vouch for how handy they are to take out in the field. However, the ability to take a bird photo and have the computer vision software identify the species is something quite new. Even though the photo ID presently works, the Cornell Lab has a goal of having 1000+ images of each species to accurately identify the species.

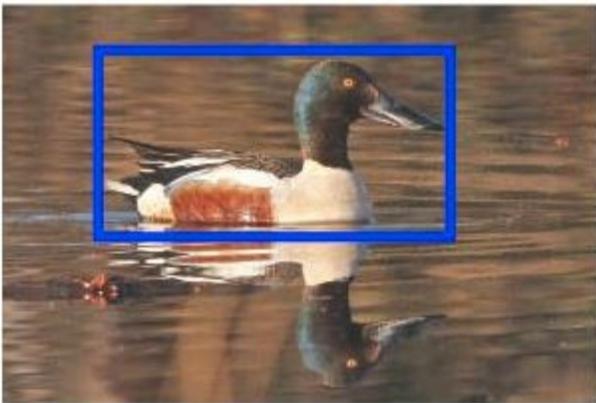
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Notes from the President continued

On their website, merlin.allaboutbirds.org, Cornell is actively seeking additional photos to help train their photo identification system. They seek your help in supplying images for this task. They have a list of "Most Wanted" photos for American birds, along with the number to reach the magic goal of 1000 of every North American species.

Okay, here is where you can turn your birding ID skills into something of a computer birding game. In order to help train the Merlin Photo ID engine, the lab is asking for your help in improving the accuracy and number of species that it can identify. At merlinvision.macaulaylibrary.org the lab provides you a photo that has been submitted and you simply draw a bounding box around the visible portion of the bird. This is very easy to do and you get to see images of lots of birds.

Note that the Cornell Lab, along with eBird, is expanding to not just the United States, so many of the birds you will help identify are outside the US. That doesn't mean that you will have to identify them (although you also have the option to indicate if the species is misidentified), but you are simply helping the artificial intelligence get better at picking out the important details. And, while doing this, you get a glimpse of the range and diversity of birds from locations. Beware that it can be somewhat addictive!



Cornell Lab provided photo of bird identifying program.
Bounding box drawn around visible portion of bird.



Local Birding Opportunities

Peoria Audubon Society

Saturday, April 15 (date tentative) Field trip to Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago, a 14,000 acre privately owned wetland NW of Canton. This area is closed to the public and has excellent birding habitat. Advanced reservations are required. Details are not yet finalized. Check PAS website or call Dennis Endicott at (309) 807-3874 for more information.

Saturday, May 13- Birding Walk: Cooper Park Join Pete Fenner from 7-9:00 AM, meeting at the trail head at the north end of the park in East Peoria. Contact Pete Fenner at (309) 258-5969 for more information

Forest Park Nature Center

Saturday, April 15 and Saturday, May 13, 7:30-8:30 AM. Morning Bird Hikes Ages 10+
All levels of expertise welcome. Bring your binoculars. (Some pairs available to lend out.)

Tawny Oaks

**Saturday, April 29 and Saturday May 20, 7 AM
Songbird Mania! Ages 10+**

Bird hikes in the prime months for migrating songbirds. Bring your binoculars.

Conservation Alert

Inspiration - A Personal Journey

Donnie R. Dann

A friend recently asked me how I came to my passion in conservation and environmental protection. It grew out of a love of birding and travel going back many years, to the first trip I took with my family to the western United States. It was in Rocky Mountain National Park, my very first visit to one of the places that constitute our magnificent National Park system. We went on a nature walk with one of the park's rangers. He was enthusiastic and impressively knowledgeable as he explained the geology, climate, fauna and flora, and the richly diverse life forms of the region.

Some 25 years later, I was fortunate enough to vacation in a South American rainforest and I was astonished at my surroundings. It was extraordinary to see what biodiversity really means in a place where each square kilometer of [rainforest](#) contains 1,000 different species! The comparable number for North America is about 100. How could I not be inspired? Then I saw a [Paradise Tanager](#) and was completely hooked.

But that tanager left an impact on me that went far beyond birds. All life on earth—human and non-human, plants and animals—depends on our lands, waters and air. Protecting them for future generations is no less important than every other issue that commands our attention.

- Every company on earth that makes things must rely in part on the natural world.
- According to the [U.S. National Cancer](#) Institute, more than two-thirds of all medicines found to have cancer-fighting properties come from rainforest plants.
- More than half of *all* medicines are derived from wild organisms, per the Center for Natural Lands Management.
- Agriculture's success in [combating disease](#) has evolved via genes from the natural world.

But what inspires *me* is unimportant. It is the mass of humanity that must recognize that we are all in jeopardy unless we make accommodations for the countless other living things with which we share this planet. We must remember that they make life on Earth possible for humans. My mission is to raise awareness of the people who don't "get it." Here are some suggestions you can offer to people you know in need of similar inspiration:

- The BBC TV series [Natural World](#) is outstanding.
- Similar programs include [Nature](#), [Nova](#), [Planet Earth](#), and the nature shows on [National Geographic](#), all of which boast marvelous photography. One of the best is a recent series on PBS by Ken Burns called [The National Parks](#), America's Best Idea.
- Astrophysicist and author Neil de Grasse Tyson narrates the fascinating [Cosmos, A Spacetime Odyssey](#). It is a physical, not a natural science, but is still highly recommended.
- For a single great example, turn on <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/sagebrush-sea-full-episode/12341/>.

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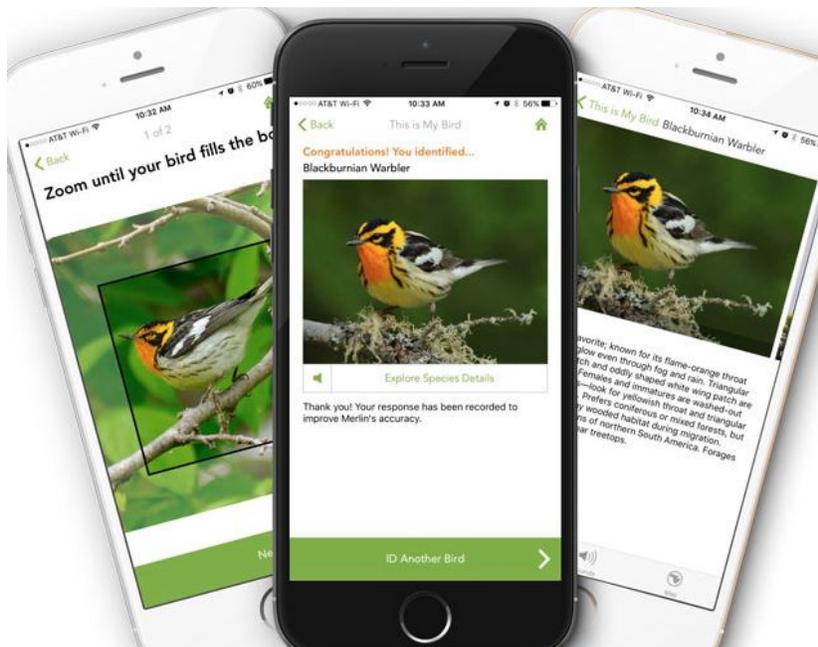
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Bring your cell phone to the Membership Meeting at Forest Park Nature Center on March 4 at 7:00 pm. Pete Fenner will discuss the eBird mobile application and how to use this essential birding tool.



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