



The Meadowlark Messenger

April 2011 • Volume 28, No. 3

Champaign County Audubon Society • A chapter of the National Audubon Society

Urban Birding

**Caroline Mallory & Darin Eastburn
Co-Presidents of Champaign
County Audubon Society (CCAS)**

Pristine wilderness offers solitude and a connection to the natural world that is unparalleled, but few of us are privileged enough to spend much time in those environments. Indeed, most of us live and work in urban or semi-urban settings that are characterized by high-density populations of humans and sparse green space. Yet, research evidence from the social sciences is clear that spending time in the outdoors improves the health and quality of life for people of all ages.

What is your favorite park? Do you prefer the nature trails found throughout the Forest Preserve District? Or would you rather accompany your children or grandchildren to the play structures in the city parks? Perhaps you appreciate the central location of Hessel Park or the educational exhibits at the Anita Purvis Nature Center? There is a park for everyone.

As residents of Champaign County, we enjoy the advantages of well-managed and engaging park systems that offer a variety of recreational opportunities including bird observation. Parks provide a variety of environments such as prairie, riparian, and forest that host migratory and resident birds and other wildlife. Parks provide sanctuary, a place of rejuvenation and refuge, for humans, flora, fauna, and fungi.

Long-time birder and board member of CCAS, Beth Chato, enjoys birding at Lake of the Woods. We can understand her choice. Here is a park that has something for everyone – the Sangamon River is an important habitat for plants and animals and is bordered by a mature forest that is host to many woodpeckers, kingfishers, chickadees and other forest birds. The combination of water, woods and field brings a wide variety of bird species, and the size of the park means that there is adequate habitat for resident species, such as the Pileated Woodpecker, to nest.

Our favorite park is in southeast Urbana – Meadowbrook. Home to one of the few restored prairie habitats in the state, Meadowbrook is host to birds that require or prefer grassland habitat, such as pheasant, woodcock, song sparrow, and meadowlark. In addition to birds, there are a wide variety of mammals and plant life in the park. Spring and summer flowering plants color the prairie in purple and gold, while fall brings a warm orange to the tall grasses.

In winter, the park is cloaked in snow and is a less traveled place. The park is just a short distance from our home and is part of our daily walking routine. The paved paths are wide and accessible to people with varied abilities. We find walking in the park to be a peaceful way to start or end a busy day.

When was the last time you went to the park? Have you considered how the green space and wildlife habitat in parks makes our world a more beautiful place? Have you considered how parks contribute to our quality of life and health?

The Champaign County Audubon Society collaborates with the park systems to further our mission of conservation through education. We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunities available in our parks, and Happy Birding!

April Program
Urbana Free Library
Auditorium
Thursday, April 7
7 pm

**Spring
Wildflowers**



presented by
Bob Vaiden, Chair of
Habitat Committee for
Champaign County
Audubon Society

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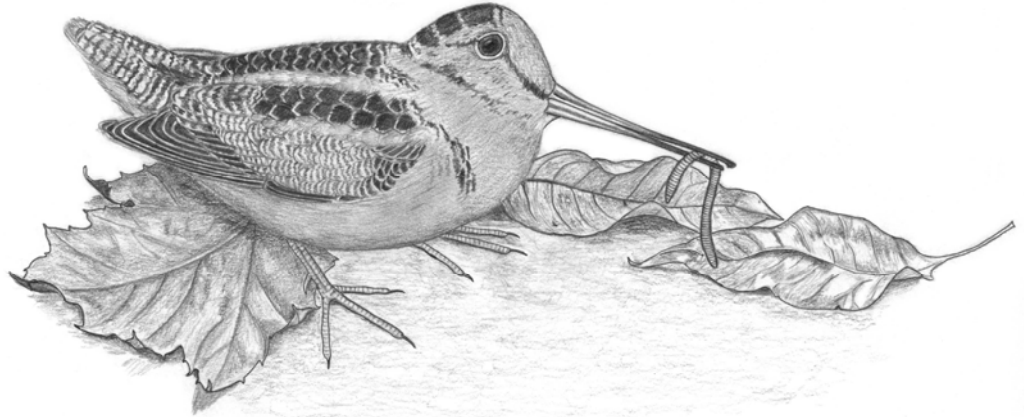
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Champaign County Audubon publishes *The Meadowlark Messenger* nine times per year. Comments regarding the newsletter or articles for submission are welcome by the Co-Presidents.

Recent Bird Sightings

FIELD NOTES from Beth Chato

American Woodcock are back and displaying at sunrise and at sunset in Meadowbrook Park. The local Peregrine Falcon is still being sighted. Sharp-shinned Hawks and a Goshawk were also seen. A Ross's Goose was at the Lowe's Pond, and also at Middle Fork Preserve along with hundreds of White-fronted and Snow Geese. Homer had Rusty Blackbirds on Feb 25. The first Busey Woods walk had two Eurasian Collared Doves. Meadowbrook Park had a Brown Thrasher, Fox Sparrow, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler on Feb 8, and a Tree Swallow on Feb 13. Arcola Marsh is a great spot for waterfowl: 11 species of ducks plus a Horned Grebe on March 19. Spring and spring birds are on the way.



FIELD TRIPS

Tuesday March 29, 8:45 AM. Trip to Heron County Park, Danville to see heron rookery and waterfowl. Helen Parker leads this Natural Areas Study Group but all are welcome. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center. This is a half day trip - easy walking, carpooling, shared expenses. May want to bring lunch.

Saturday April 9, 7 AM. David Thomas will lead trip to Point Pleasant wetland at Middlefork Forest Preserve near Penfield. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center. This is a half day trip - waterproof footwear and lunch advised. Will probably visit other nearby sites. Easy to moderately difficult walking, but participants can choose.

Saturday April 23, 8 AM. Bob Vaiden will lead trip to Urbana's Weaver Park. Afterwards Bob will take us through his woodland backyard planted in native species. Meet at 2006 E. Main, Urbana. Easy walking and casual.



SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

March 6 – May 29, 7:30 - 9 AM. Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods continue. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.

CONSERVATION CORNER Helen Parker, Conservation Chair

Nukes or no nukes?

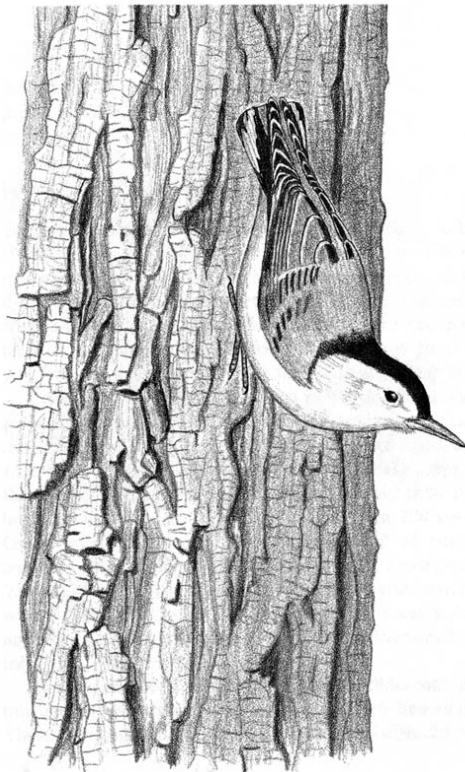
The earthquake in Japan that damaged their nuclear reactors has caused many people to be questioning the future of nuclear power. Should we simply say "no"? There are a couple of considerations. The first is that a properly operating nuclear power plant is one of the cleanest energy sources around; but there are, obviously, things that can go wrong. Nobody in their right mind would site a nuclear power plant on the San Andreas fault --or, closer to home, the New Madrid fault. While we do not know where all the faults on this planet are located, we can avoid the major ones that we do know about. There exist safer designs for power plants--the Candu system, with its feedback that automatically shuts down when something starts to go wrong is one that I know about. There is also the ever-present problem of what to do with radioactive waste--the fact that that is as much a political problem as a scientific one does not make it less of a problem.

We do need additional energy sources. Ideally, these would be renewable--but putting these in place takes time and money. We've passed "peak oil". The primary readily available source is coal--which is also the dirtiest source around. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has just proposed some new regulations that they say would, if implemented, save 17,000 lives /year. The key phrase there is "if implemented". In a recent bill on government funding, the House cut EPA's budget by \$3 billion dollars, the biggest cut ever. Multiple bills have also been introduced in both the House and Senate to prevent or delay EPA from regulating greenhouse gas pollution. None of this is intended to advocate nuclear power--but I hope it will make at least some people start thinking about it--and about the alternatives.

The Monarch butterfly migration north has begun!

OK, how about something a little more optimistic? The Monarch butterfly migration north has begun! These amazing insects fly south from all over North America to winter in Mexico, then with the coming of spring, head north again. They lay eggs on the first milkweed they encounter--then the next generation continues on its way back to us. It will be a few weeks before any of them reach Champaign County-- but they are on their way!

+++++



Nuthatches in the Spring Woods

“Soft-voiced, soft-colored, gentle-mannered, they glide over the rough branches with their boat-shaped bodies, going up and down and around, with apparently an extra joint in their necks that enables them, head-downward, to look straight out from the tree-trunk; their motions seem far less mechanical and angular than those of the woodpeckers and the creepers. Downy can back down a tree by short hitches, but he never ventures to do it headfirst, nor does the creeper; but the universal joint in the nuthatch’s body and its rounded keel enable it to move head on indifferently in all directions. Its soft nasal call in the spring woods is one of the most welcome of sounds. It is like the voice of children, plaintive but contented, a soft interrogation in the ear of the sylvan gods. What a contrast to the sharp, steely note of the woodpeckers – the Hairy’s like the metallic sound of the tinsmith and Downy’s a minor key of the same!”

- John Burroughs

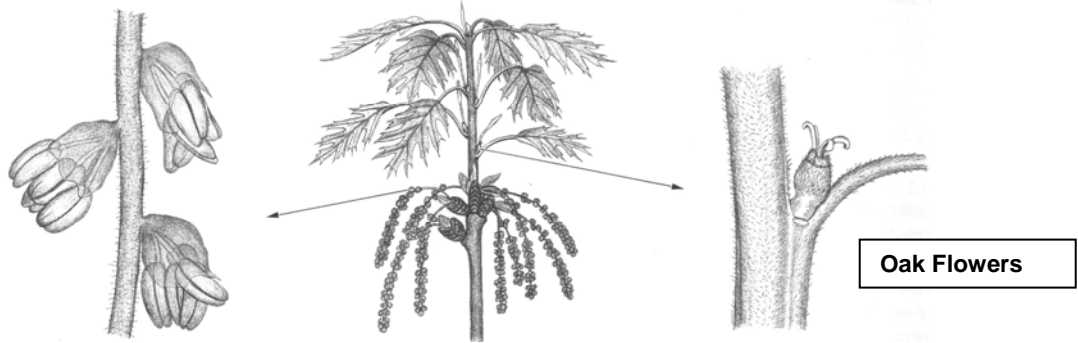
AUDUBON NATURE SHOP

Unique Nature-Related Gifts

ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER, 1515 NORTH BROADWAY, URBANA, IL

9-4 MONDAY-SATURDAY

SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



Spring wildflowers are beginning to show. We have a variety of guides to help learn about them. Charlie Harper fans will enjoy jigsaw puzzles of his posters.

with text, photos, sounds, range maps and more. Go to our website www.champaigncountyaudubon.org for a link to this valuable resource.



ART EXHIBITION AT ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER

Meadowbrook: A Visual Diary

by local artist Tom Kovacs

Feb 5 - May 27, 2011, Anita Purves Nature Center

Opening Reception February 12, 2011 from 1-3 pm.

pencil drawings taken from Tom's diary.

From the artist: "Regardless of season and weather, each of my many walks through Meadowbrook Park brings at least one memorable moment, almost always unexpected, and always rewarding. I record these moments with camera, and later reinterpret them with pencil and paper, thereby revisiting each moment. Thus, using my graphite shorthand, I feel and touch tree bark, metal insects and live bird feathers, and dip my fingers in the icy waters of McCullough Creek."

Get Your Meadowlark Messenger Delivered Right to Your Inbox!

Would you like to go paperless and receive your newsletter earlier? You can receive all the information you depend on from this newsletter in your inbox! Please visit our website (www.champaigncountyaudubon.org) and look under "What's New" for a link to a page where you can enter your email address. *(Please be patient with us as we work out the kinks of this system; you may still receive a printed newsletter for a limited time after signing up.)*

Join Audubon. Yes, I'd like to join! Please enroll me as a member



Membership for 2011

Friend of Champaign County Audubon Society \$15.00 _____ new renewal
(includes CCAS newsletter only)

Friend of CCAS and National Audubon Society \$35.00 _____
(includes "Audubon" magazine & CCAS newsletter)

My check for \$_____ is enclosed, made **payable to Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS)**. Your information and NAS contribution will be forwarded to National.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

C1ZG500Z

7XCH

(Please provide 9-digit zip code)

CCAS Member Activities & Benefits:

- 14 Audubon Adventures
- Classrooms
- Mini-grants to educators
- Kendeigh grants for scientific studies
- Great Backyard Bird Count
- Youth Bird Count Day
- Nature Shop at the Nature Center
- Meadowbrook prairie restoration
- Field trips, Annual Bird Counts
- Annual Birdathons
- Monthly member meetings
- Meadowlark Messenger

Send this application and your check to:

Champaign Co. Audubon Society, Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

Education Corner, Stacey Clementz

Making Good Choices

Cross-Curricular Teaching of History and the Environment in Champaign County

June 9 and 10, 2011, 9:00am to 4:00pm daily

Museum of the Grand Prairie*, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, Mahomet, Illinois

**formerly the Early American Museum*

Learn how to help your students develop critical thinking skills through investigation of the environment and human history of land use. Workshop activities will draw on a variety of disciplines including science, fine arts, history and language arts and allow participants to explore the natural and cultural history of East Central Illinois. Activity extensions will be included to address students with special needs. Geared toward grades 3-8.

CPDUs: 11.5

COST: \$40

The registration deadline is April 15, 2011 and is accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Late registration will be accepted after April 15 as space allows. For additional information and to register, call 217-896-2455 or e-mail Stacey at sclementz@ccfpd.org.

*****VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES Bob Vaiden, Habitat Chair*****

Help rebuild our shattered environment! Join other volunteers and the Urbana Park District (UPD) for **Stewardship Saturdays**. Help remove invasive weeds, plant natives, improve trails and restore the native landscape. Please dress accordingly; gloves, tools and refreshments are provided. Call Anita Purves Nature Center (384-4062) to notify the UPD you are coming, AND so you can be notified if the work session has to be canceled!

Stewardship work days:

April 9th: Busey Woods 9 -11 am. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center

Weaver Park 1 - 3 pm. Turn right into park on grass "apron" on East Main near Smith Road, OR (if barricade is not removed), proceed East to Dodson Drive, turn south (right) on Dodson; park along Dodson Drive, or turn right and park along Elm St.

April 23rd: Meadowbrook 9 -11 am. Meet at Race Street parking lot

Perkins Road 1 -3 pm. Meet at Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road



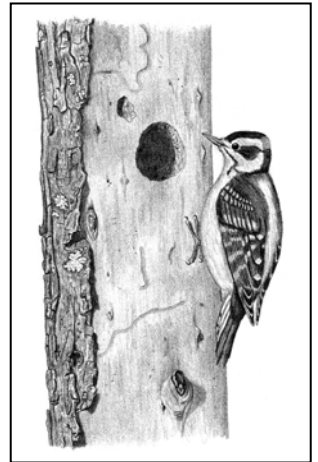
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Calendar of Events, April 2011

- Tuesday** **March 29, 8:45 AM. Trip to Heron County Park, Danville** to see heron rookery and waterfowl. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Tuesday** **April 5. Be sure to vote.**
- Thursday** **April 7, 7 PM. General meeting** at Urbana Free Library Auditorium. **Bob Vaiden, Habitat Chair** of Champaign County Audubon Society will present *Spring Wildflowers*.
- Saturday** **April 9, 7 AM. David Thomas will lead trip to Point Pleasant wetland at Middlefork Forest Preserve near Penfield.** Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Thursday** **April 21, 7:15 PM. Champaign County Audubon Society Board Meeting** at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Saturday** **April 23, 8 AM. Bob Vaiden will lead trip to east Urbana's Weaver Park.** Afterwards Bob will take us through his woodland backyard planted in native species. Meet at 2006 E. Main St., Urbana.
- Sundays** **March 6- May 29, 7:30 – 9 AM.** Sunday morning bird walks through Crystal Lake Park and Busey Woods. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot.