



The Meadowlark Messenger

September 2010 • Volume 27, No. 6

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

Summer Renewal Cleo and Steve D'Arcy Co-Presidents of Champaign County Audubon Society (CCAS)

As we left you in June we encouraged you to take some time during the summer to lose yourself in bird watching or some other activity that renews your spirit. We were lucky to escape the hot weather of east central Illinois for several weeks in Vermont. Although it can sometimes be quite warm there during the day, it always cools down at night for great sleeping. So we were well rested and able to enjoy a range of new experiences this summer, including some with people, some with birds, and some with both.

In the central Mad River Valley of Vermont we participated in several events that were part of the area's first "Festival of the Great Outdoors." We experienced our first Bird Sit with the local Audubon group, the "Mad Birders." (Yes, we now have "Mad Birder" hats – who could resist?) The participants in the Bird Sit spent part or all of a 12-hour period in a 17' diameter circle of stones (what else in Vermont!) in a roadside field, identifying species by sight and sound. During our 3 early morning hours, the group identified 25 different species. This experience convinced us that we needed to improve our knowledge of bird songs and calls, so we invested in the Peterson "Birding by Ear" CD set and listened to the first CD on our drive home. While we do think that these CDs will help us learn to identify more birds by their songs and maybe even some by their call notes, the

most entertaining part of the ride was having our cat meow after every single bird song that played on the CD!

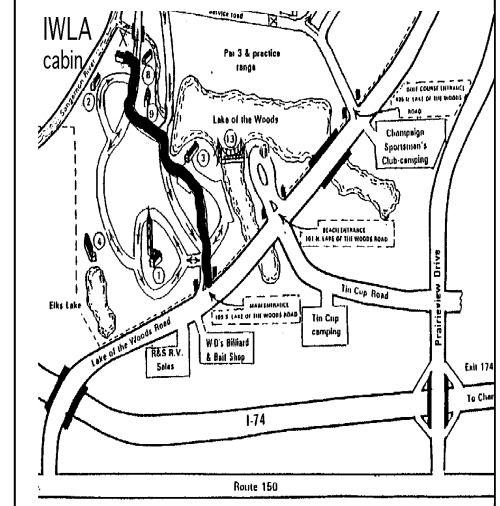
One other memorable bird experience of the summer came on a morning walk through the woods. As we meandered along a quiet path, we heard rustling in the nearby undergrowth. Suddenly, a relatively large chicken-like bird exploded in noisy flight diagonally across the path ahead of us. A few seconds later, a second bird followed suit. When we got a better view of one other bird with a distinct crest and small turkey-like tail walking quickly away in the undergrowth we concluded that we had disturbed a family of Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*). There were probably several other grouse that we did not see, as the typical clutch size is 10-14 eggs and the young stay with the hen until fall. The behavior we saw was in contrast to that reported to us by a Vermont hunter, who said that grouse typically walk quietly and deliberately in the opposite direction from that taken by nearby humans.

Even so, an explosion of flight is how many people first see a Ruffed Grouse. In the past, we have heard these rather reclusive birds, rather than seen them. And we have not heard a song or a call, but rather the loud drumming sound the male makes with his wings in order to attract a female. This unmistakable noise penetrates through the woods, where Ruffed Grouse survive on a varied diet that includes buds and berries, insects and even salamanders. The biggest threat to these birds is not hunters, but loss of suitable forest habitat.

We hope that you had a memorable bird encounter this summer and that you came away from it renewed and excited about birding. Fall will soon be here, so please join Champaign County Audubon Society members and friends for our Sunday morning bird walks in Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park. If you do, you are likely to have more wonderful interactions with both people and birds.

SEPTEMBER MEETING WELCOME BACK

Please join us for the first monthly meeting of the fall: a potluck supper held at the Izaak Walton Cabin at Lake of the Woods in Mahomet on **Thursday, September 2, at 6:30 PM**. Bring a friend, a dish to share, and up to 10 slides of your trips or special places you visited this past summer. Cold drinks will be provided; please bring your own table service. Please see the map below for directions to the Izaak Walton Cabin (**IWLA** on map). Hope to see you there!



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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.

FIELD NOTES: August 2010 Darin Eastburn **Recent Bird Sightings**

Here are some highlights of the interesting birds reported in the area over the past few weeks. In Meadowbrook Park a group of Northern Bobwhite Quail and a Blue-winged Teal were spotted. Sightings have been abundant at Heron Pond recently. Reports from this area include Chimney Swifts, Green and Great Blue Herons, Eastern Kingbirds, Phoebes, Barn Swallows, Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Bluebirds, Sora, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbirds, Wood Ducks, Purple Martins, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Sandhill Cranes. At the Middlefork River Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfisher, Great Egret were sighted. A report from the Sangamon River Forest Preserve included sightings of a Solitary Sandpiper, American Redstart, and Black-and-white Warblers. In the general area birders have recently seen Cooper's Hawks, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Cardinals, Catbirds, American Goldfinches, House Wrens, Carolina Wrens, Mourning Doves, House Finches, Redstarts, a Black-billed Cuckoo, a Hooded Merganser. I am looking forward to seeing reports as fall migration gets underway.

SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

Sundays, September 5 – October 31, 7:30 – 9 AM through Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park. Meet at Anita Purves parking lot.



CONSERVATION CORNER

Helen Parker, Conservation Chair
Of waves, wind, and wolves

This summer, I had the privilege of attending an Elderhostel at Isle Royale National Park. For the geographically challenged among you, Isle Royale is a large island (archipelago, actually) in northern Lake Superior. It is geographically part of Minnesota but legally part of Michigan. After a day on the Keweenaw peninsula, we boarded the Park Service boat "Ranger 3" and headed for the Island. The lake was dead calm—where were the waves and wind we had expected? Given my susceptibility to seasickness, their absence was probably a good thing.

Among wildlife enthusiasts and ecologists, Isle Royale's primary claim to fame is the ongoing wolf-moose interaction study, which has been running for 60 years now—the oldest ecological study on the planet. Wolves apparently crossed to the island on the ice during a very cold winter when the lake froze from Minnesota to the island; moose, which are very strong swimmers, presumably swam over. Regardless, both are there, despite major population fluctuations. The wolves were nearly wiped out by a distemper epidemic, but have been increasing; the moose population crashed from around 32,000 to around 3200 at the present time. What is not known is whether the current wolf population is all descended from the original colonists or whether others have come from the mainland. This would not be hard to determine with DNA analysis, but the Park Service will not fund that study. Rolf Peterson, the scientist in residence on the Island, continues the main ecological studies.

Another prairie remnant

Off US 45 near Rantoul, there is a 9-acre prairie site with a gravel pit that was once owned by the Pope family and used for billboards. According to Dave Monk of Heartland Pathways, it has the moisture gradient and species diversity typical of the Bloomington Moraine in this area. The site has been purchased by Heartland Pathways and with the help of donations and volunteers hopes to gradually return this prairie to "a reasonable facsimile of its natural state". For more information contact Dave at Heartland Pathways, 115 N Market Street, Champaign (351-1911).

The BP oil spill effects, continued

So what effect is the great oil gusher in the gulf having on the animals of the Gulf? The true answer is "nobody knows." The National Wildlife Federation has a website: <http://www.nwf.org/oil-spill/effect-on-wildlife.aspx> that gives a running total of known animals dead.

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

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

Membership for 2010

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: _____ C0ZG500Z

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ 7XCH

(Please provide 9-digit zip code)

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, Education Chair (sclementz@ccfpd.org)

Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures is an educational kit for use in the classroom. This year, an all-new edition of Audubon Adventures is being released entitled **Wildlife on the Move**. Wildlife on the Move is a standards-based classroom curriculum supplement that focuses on migrating animals. Content will be rooted in the core elementary science, language arts, and social studies (civics) curricula appropriate for 3rd to 5th grade. Wildlife on the Move contains four study units:

1. Amazing journeys and life cycles of migrating birds of the Americas;
2. Monarch butterfly and dragonfly migration
3. Whales and sea turtles and their migratory seasons;
4. Action for Planet Earth focusing on ways that young people can make valuable contributions to conservation in their community.

Sponsors Needed

Generous donations from our members allow CCAS to sponsor Audubon Adventure kits for local classrooms. If you would like to sponsor a kit for one or more classrooms, please send a check made out to CCAS to PO Box 882, Urbana, IL. 61803. Each kit costs \$38.50. Please have checks in by Sept. 13th.

Interested in a Free Kit?

If you are a teacher and are interested in requesting a kit, contact me at sclementz@ccfpd.org by Sept. 10th. The kit is **free** to you because of our sponsors! For more information on the kit visit <http://education.audubon.org/audubon-adventures>.

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.)



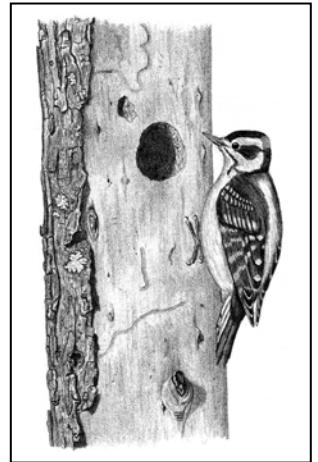
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Return service requested



Calendar of Events, September 2010

- Sundays** **September 6 – October 31, 7:30 AM.** Sunday morning bird walks at Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot. Most walks end around 9:00 AM.
- Thursday** **September 2, 6:30 PM. Potluck at Lake of the Woods, Izaak Walton Cabin.** Please bring your own table service and a dish to share. Bring a friend and up to 10 slides of your trips or special places you visited this past summer.



- Thursday** **September 16, 7:15 PM.** Monthly CCAS Board meeting at Anita Purves Nature Center.
- Thursday** **September 23, First Day of Autumn.**