



The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

April Program: CCAS Kendeigh Grant Research Presentation

Almost-Empty Nesters: Investigating the Post-fledging Ecology of Eastern Whip-poor-wills

Thursday, April 6, 2023, 7:00–8:00 pm
[Check the CCAS events page for Zoom details](#)

Join us on Zoom to learn about the exciting and important conservation research conducted by Sarah Stewart, one of our Kendeigh Grant Recipients from 2022!

Project: Almost-Empty Nesters: Investigating the Post-fledging Ecology of Eastern Whip-poor-wills

The period of time between when a young songbird leaves its nest (fledges) and leaves the territory where it was hatched (disperses) is very risky. “Mortality rates are greatest directly after leaving the nest,” Sarah explains, and so “fledglings often need to use different habitats than those used by adults [to benefit from] greater physical cover from predators and the elements.” Little is known about the post-fledging ecology of the Eastern Whip-poor-will, a species that lays its eggs directly on the ground and cares for its young for up to three weeks after they fledge. The species is declining, and so Sarah used radio-tags on whip-poor-will fledglings to better understand their survival rates and habitat use, to inform habitat conservation efforts. The Kendeigh Grant she received was used to the cost of nine radio transmitters and associated supplies.



All seminars are recorded and posted to our YouTube channel afterward. Access details and more information can be found on our website: www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/birdwalks-and-programs

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Champaign County Audubon Society

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- President: Colin Dobson
- Vice President: Roger Digges
- Secretary: Jennifer Wick
- Treasurer: Todd Kinney

Members at Large

- Beth Chato
- Megan Skrip
- vacant

Committee Chairs

- Bylaws: Roger Digges
- Conservation: Zachary Sutton
- Education: (vacant)
- Field Trip: (vacant);
Beth Chato, Colin Dobson, Brody Dunn
- Finance: (vacant)
- Membership: Brock Martin
- Program: vacant
- Communications: Sara Johnson (Chair);
Shoshie Bauer, Jeff Bryant (Birdnotes
Listserv), Susan Pollock, Megan Skrip,
Sarah Stewart

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

Contact us!

P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803
ChampaignCountyAudubon.org
mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org

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Welcome, New Member!

*David Busboom**

Thank You, Renewing Members!

Jean Ochs, James Smith, Andrea Bretl, Robert Espeseth*,
Melissa Records**

**Indicates donation with dues.*

In Memory of Charlene Anchor

A special thanks to Paul Chen who made a donation in remembrance of Charlene Anchor.

Mini-Grants for Educators

Each year, CCAS offers mini-grants to provide support to Champaign County educators who want to bring environmental education to their students through creative projects and learning materials.

Educators can apply for up to \$250 for their grant.

Since 2006, our mini-grants have funded around \$20,000 in educational projects at Champaign County schools. We've sponsored the purchase of classroom equipment and books, funded guest speakers, and underwritten the creation of outdoor learning areas and gardens, field trips, professional development, and more.

Due date for submissions: May 31

For more information: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/minigrants-for-educators>.

Bird of the Month

Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President

March's bird of the month, the Red-winged Blackbird, was unusual in that males and females have such different plumage they look like they belong to two separate species. April's bird of the month is unusual for very different reasons.

The smallest species by far in much of North America, this bird ranges in weight from 0.1 to 0.2 ounces, or somewhere between the weight of a dime and that of a nickel. It is no longer than the average person's index finger. While the Red-winged Blackbird flaps its wings 6 times per second, this bird averages 53 wingbeats a second, so fast the wings become just a blur to an observer. April's bird of the month can hover like a helicopter and precisely adjust its position up, down, even backwards. This remarkable avian species is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, the only hummingbird commonly found in our area, or, for that matter,



Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

is perched, but harder then to find the bird. Much like the male Red-winged Blackbirds' wing patches, these males' throat display attracts the attention of rival males and willing females. Females' green backs and light undersides and lack of a ruby throat allow them to blend in with the foliage and the sky when they are sitting on their nests. (Males don't share nesting duties; they stay just long enough to court and mate.)

You can find Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the wild by checking out flowering gardens (they love tubular flowers) or woodland edges. But the best way to see these incredible birds is by planting such flowers in your garden or putting up a hummingbird feeder. These birds usually begin arriving in late April, although they can come earlier, so you may want to put up your feeder as soon as the threat of freezing is past. You can buy a commercial feeder or make one of your own. [All About Birds](#) suggests that you fill it with a mixture of 1/4 cup kitchen sugar to a cup of water. You can store any excess nectar in your refrigerator. Change the sugar water at least once a week in cool weather and 2–3 times a week when it's hot. Clean the feeder with warm soapy water after emptying it. Having hummingbird-friendly flowers in your yard will help attract them to your feeders.

How are Ruby-throated Hummingbirds doing? According to the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#), ruby-throat numbers have been steadily increasing for the last half century (perhaps because of feeders). Partners in Flight estimate that there are 36 million Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

anywhere east of the Great Plains. (Western birders are privileged to have 14 other species to observe, although they don't all occur in the same area.)

How you can identify a Ruby-throated Hummingbird depends on whether it is flying or perched. The rapid wing movement of a hummingbird in flight makes a low humming sound. Hence its generic name. You may also see its bright green back and top of its head as well as its lighter gray/white/greenish underside. Males have an iridescent ruby throat (in the right light; otherwise, it just looks dark) while females have a light-colored throat. It is easier to see these markings when the bird

Upcoming Events

See our latest updates at <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/all-events>

Sunday Morning Bird Walks

Sundays, 7:30–9:00 am
March 5 to May 28
September 3 to October 29
Anita Purves Nature Center

Join a 75+ year tradition in Champaign-Urbana for an all ages and beginner-friendly bird walk with CCAS. Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot for a free guided bird walk through either Busey Woods or Crystal Lake Park (decided on the day). All skill levels and ages are welcome (under 15 with adult). Hope to see you there! Cancellations will be posted to our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page 1 hour before event.



Wood Duck. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

Almost-Empty Nesters: Investigating the Post-fledging Ecology of Eastern Whip-poor-wills

Thursday, April 6, 2023, 7:00–8:00 pm
Check the CCAS events page for Zoom details

Presenter: Sarah Stewart, Kendeigh Grant awardee.

CCAS Board Meeting

Monday, April 17, 7:00-8:30 pm

All CCAS members are welcome to attend our board meetings. For information, mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org.

Boneyard Creek Community Day

Saturday, April 22, 2023, 9:00 am

Please help the birds that use our creeks as their home by signing up to volunteer with the Boneyard Creek Community Day on April 22. When registering, consider selecting the Anita Purves - Busey Woods/ Crystal Lake location. For details or to sign up: <http://www.boneyardcreek.org/index.html#register>.



International Dark Sky Week Celebration

Saturday, April 22, 2023, 7:30–9:30 pm
Activity Center at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve

All ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more information: pcain@ccfpd.org.

Planting Day, Volunteers Needed

Saturday, April 29, Time: TBD
Meet in Anita Purves Center Parking Lot

Come help CCAS and Urbana Park District improve habitat for birds! CCAS is asking for volunteers to help plant live stakes of native bird-friendly shrubs at Crystal Lake Park. This is very low intensity work that can have a huge impact for birds, no skill or experience needed! Meet at the Anita Purves parking lot; time is yet to be determined. Please contact zaksutton2@gmail.com to sign-up or with any questions.

Exploring Children's Value Development Through Mist-netting Experiences

Thursday, May 4, 7:00–8:00 pm
Check the CCAS events page for Zoom details.

Presenter: Seunguk Shin, Kendeigh Grant awardee.

Grassland Bird Stopover Habitat Use and Migratory Behavior in Illinois

Thursday, May 4, 7:00–8:00 pm
Check the CCAS events page for Zoom details.

Presenter: Nicole Suckow, Kendeigh Grant awardee.

2023 Spring Bird Count: May 6

Spring Bird Count (SBC) is a yearly bird count that consists of volunteers conducting bird censuses on the Saturday that falls between May 4 and May 10. The censuses are conducted in all 102 counties in Illinois, however, in any given year a few counties are not censused.

Each county has a compiler responsible for recruiting volunteers and assigning them areas to count within their county. This is especially important to avoid double coverage of an area. Compilers also tabulate all data collected within their county and send it to the state compiler. Volunteers 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.

Beth Chato (ejchato@gmail.com) is the compiler for CCAS. For more information about Spring Bird Count, see <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>.



New Resource on Our Website: Garden for Wildlife!

There are many ways to help your local birds, and one of them is to provide the plants that help them thrive—whether by supplying food, shelter, a place to nest, or all of the above! A new page on our website now features our favorite advice and resources to help you choose the most bird-friendly plants for your garden. Find book recommendations, guidance for selecting native plants, and helpful links to local nurseries by visiting: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/garden-for-wildlife>.

Submit Your Bird Data

Beth Chato, CCAS Board Member, would like to receive your birding reports for 2023 to help track birds in Champaign County.

On March 15, Beth presented from Audubon a report of collected bird records for 2022 from the Urbana parks to the meeting of the Urbana Park Board Commissioners. She commended the district for its strong commitment to careful management of the natural areas in its system.

Busey Woods and Crystal Lake had 132 species, Meadowbrook Park had 131, Perkins Site had 36 (which had limited access due to construction), and Weaver Park had 68. The whole of Champaign County had 243 species recorded.

Looking forward, Beth would appreciate receiving all reports of what people are seeing at our parks and preserves. Complete lists for each park and preserve, including all the common species, are requested. (Ebird reports usually are just the most unusual species spotted.)

Send your reports or reach out for more information to Beth at ejchato@gmail.com.



Join Champaign County Audubon Society!

Yes, I'd like to become a member!

When you join the Champaign County Audubon Society, 100% of your dues and donations support our efforts (and they're tax deductible!).

\$ _____ CCAS Membership (\$15 due each January).

\$ _____ Additional donation to CCAS

\$ _____ TOTAL

Or Join Online!

Save time by contributing via your mobile device or computer! [Visit our website to join or donate online.](#)

I am a new member I am renewing my membership

Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone # (_____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

CCAS members will be automatically enrolled to receive our newsletter by email; check this box if you would prefer to receive a **paper** copy.

Checks should be made payable to CCAS. Send this form and your payment to: CCAS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882. Thank you!

Our Mission:

Promote interest, enjoyment, and understanding of all aspects of our natural environment, and actively encourage the protection of wildlife and native habitats.

Join National Audubon Society

When you join National Audubon Society you receive one year of Audubon magazine. You also have the option to receive local birding and community events delivered to your inbox from CCAS.

- **New members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/nas-g50> or call 1-844-428-3826. Please tell them Champaign County Audubon Society sent you using our chapter code "G50."
- **Renewing members:** Go online to <http://bit.ly/renew-nas> or call 1-844-428-3826.



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