



The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

November Program

Exploring Factors Contributing to the Decline of Eastern Whip-poor-wills

Thursday, November 2, 2023, 7:00 pm
Urbana Free Library Auditorium
Open to the public; for all ages

Join us for a presentation by Dr. Mike Ward, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



Overview: The vocalizations of Eastern Whip-poor-wills were once a common occurrence just after dusk throughout Illinois, however the species is being lost from many areas. Dr. Ward and his colleagues are investigating why this species is disappearing via studies of the food they eat (moths), their survival and reproduction, and the habitats they use both on the breeding and wintering grounds.

Speaker Bio: Dr. Mike Ward is originally from Jacksonville, IL, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2004. He is currently a professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, in the College

of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois and an Ornithologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey. He and his students are working on a variety of projects throughout the Midwest but also in Texas, Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba. In summary, Dr. Ward studies the ecology and behavior of birds in natural and modified ecosystems in order to inform conservation and management.

View past programs on our YouTube channel. Access details and more information can be found on our website: www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/birdwalks-and-programs

In This Issue

Community-Supported Fund	Pg. 2	Thank You, Members!	Pg. 4
Urbana High School Birders	Pg. 2	2024 CCAS Elections	Pg. 4
Bird of the Month	Pg. 3	Field Notes	Pg. 5
Upcoming Events	Pg. 4		

Champaign County Audubon Society**Officers**

- 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
- Finance: Todd Kinney
- Membership: Brock Martin
- Program: (vacant)
- Communications: Colin Dobson
(Chair); Shoshie Bauer, Jeff Bryant
(Birdnotes Listserv), Susan Pollock
(newsletter), Megan Skrip (webmaster),
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

**Get this newsletter in your inbox!**

Would you like to go paperless and help our funds go further? Please

visit the [Membership](#) page on our website and enter your name and email address.

Find us on social media!**Facebook**[@ChampaignAudubon](#)**Twitter**[@ccaudubon](#)**Instagram**[@champaigncountyaudubon](#)**Community-Supported Fund for Research, Education, and Conservation**

Todd Kinney, CCAS Treasurer

Each year, the majority of Champaign County Audubon Society's budget is used to make grants to individuals and organizations that are doing work in concert with the mission of CCAS. These include our [S. Charles Kendeigh Research Grants](#), our [Education Mini-Grants](#), local conservation projects, and affiliation sponsorships of Illinois Environmental Council, Prairie Rivers Network, and more.

We are so grateful that the Champaign County community continues to entrust CCAS with contributions that support our mission and our work. As we continue to expand the scope of our impact, we want our contributors to be able to expand their impact as well, rather than restrict their contributions to a single use.

Going forward, we are merging the funds that we use to support Kendeigh Research Grants and Education Mini-Grants into a new single fund called the "Community-Supported Fund for Research, Education, and Conservation." In this way, contributors will no longer be forced to specify which set of grants they are making a contribution to support, and [Bird-a-Thon](#) donations will go directly to this fund to support all of our various grants. This will simplify our accounting and give us the flexibility to increase the number of grants we make each year as the number of applications vary for each type of grant.

Urbana High School Students Learn the Joy of Birding

In keeping with CCAS's mission of reaching young people, Zak Sutton, CCAS Conservation chair, led a bird walk for Urbana High School's new Outdoor Adventure Club at Carle Park. Students used the new binoculars recently purchased by CCAS to increase access to birding with upgraded

optics. (The new binoculars are available for anyone to use during Sunday Morning Bird Walks.) The students had a great time! Birds weren't very active during the walk, Zak reports, but everyone loved the male Northern Cardinal and the male American Redstart that were spotted!

Bird of the Month

Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President

You would not have found November's bird at a local feeder in 1940. Indeed you would not have found it anywhere within a thousand miles, except in a few bird cages in pet shops on Long Island.



House Finches. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

So how did they get here? Some of these small finches were captured in their native habitat in California and shipped east to be sold in the Long Island pet shops as "Hollywood finches." But when storeowners found out it was illegal to keep these birds as pets under the 1918 Migratory Bird Act Treaty, and rumors circulated that the newly organized US Fish and Wildlife Service was vigorously enforcing that act, shopkeepers let them go, enough birds that they successfully began breeding in the wild and expanding their range. By the 1960s, they were spotted in Pennsylvania. In the 1970s, a few had found their way to central Illinois. Today, if you have a suitable bird feeder and stock it with black oil sunflower seeds, you will usually attract flocks of what your bird guide calls House Finches. These birds occupy Champaign County and most of the contiguous United States, year-round.

House Finches are a little larger than goldfinches and smaller than House Sparrows, both birds you will probably see at your feeder. Males have reddish faces and breasts with streaks on their sides and bellies. The redder the male, the more successful he is in attracting a mate. Females are brownish with thick brown streaks on their tan undersides. A somewhat similar but much less common finch may also visit your feeder: male Purple Finches have raspberry red heads and breasts with less streaking and somewhat larger beaks. Female Purple

Finches have breasts similar to female House Finches, but they bear a distinctive white eyebrow stripe, which distinguishes them. If you are fortunate enough to attract a Purple Finch, you will usually only see one or maybe two.

Besides at feeders, you may find House Finches in parks, yards, anywhere with trees. They are common and gregarious. House Finches nest in trees and on buildings, using vents, ledges, street lamps, ivy, plants—they aren't picky. Females lay two to six eggs, and often more than once a season, and incubate them for about two weeks. Hatchlings stay in the nest for two to three more weeks.

In general, House Finches are doing well, perhaps too well as far as Purple Finches are concerned. In some areas, House Finches have partially displaced the native bird, which has suffered a 32% decline between 1966 and 2019, and has a population of 6.5 million compared to the House Finch's 40 million. However, House Finches have their own challenges.



Purple Finch. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

In the past 30 years, some populations of House Finch have developed mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, a disease that most noticeably causes red swollen eyes and may lead to an eye crusting over. **If you see a House Finch with this illness, take down all your feeders for a few days to allow birds to disperse, and clean them thoroughly (dish washer or soap and boiling water, diluted bleach solution or vinegar solution (10%)). As bird lovers, we need to protect them from this potentially blinding disease, and, yes, so we can continue to enjoy them.** I should mention that in 20 years of feeding House Finches, I've only seen one case. But it was heartbreaking.

Upcoming Events

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

Sunday Morning Bird Walks

Sundays, 7:30–9:00 am

September 3 to October 29

Anita Purves Nature Center, Urbana

Exploring Factors Contributing to the Decline of Eastern Whip-poor-wills

Thursday, November 2, 7:00 pm

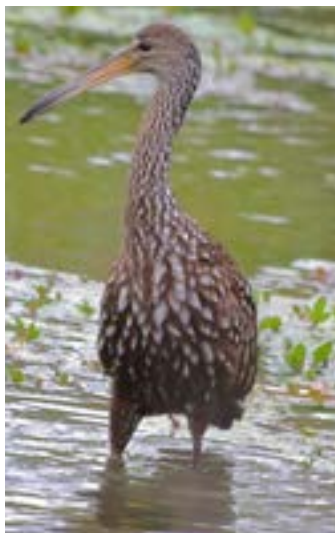
Urbana Free Library Auditorium

Presentation by Dr. Mike Ward, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. for more information: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/all-events/nov2023-monthly-program-whip-poor-wills>.

CCAS Board Meeting

Monday, November 20, 7 pm, on Zoom.

All CCAS members are welcome to attend these meetings. Email mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org for details.



Limpkin. Photo by Jeff Bryant.



Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

CCFPD 2023 Owl Night: An Up-Close Experience with our Round-Eyed, Feathered Friends

Tuesday, November 14, 5:30 – 8:30 pm

Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve

All ages welcome

For more information: <https://www.ccfpd.org/Museum-Education/Events/Event-Detail/2023-owl-night-an-up-close-experience-with-our-round-eyed-feathered-friends>.

Call for Candidates for 2024 CCAS Board

If you would like to be considered to serve on the CCAS Board for 2024, contact us at mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org by Thursday, November 16. Voting on the slate of candidates will occur on during our December member meeting. Candidates are especially needed for the following positions:

President
Member-at-Large
Communications Chair
Field Trip Chair.

Learn more about roles and opportunities at <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/volunteer> or reach out to the Board at mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org.

Welcome, New Members!

Robert Darmody, Scott Dorsey, Shelby Koehne*, Faye Lesht*, Blake Mackin, Lisa Morgan, Joshua Robinson, Zhuang Xu

Thank You, Renewing Members!

Kathleen Brinkman, Elaine Lutz, Jarod Scheunemann*

*Special thanks to members who donated above and beyond annual dues.

Donor to our Kendeigh Research Grant Fund—Thank you!

Mary Lou Brown

Field Notes

CCAS hosted two bird walks the weekend of October 14–15, one at Crystal Lake Park and another at Weaver Park. The walks at Crystal Lake Park will continue on Sunday mornings through the end of October, and we hope you will be able to join us. Although the hosted walks at Weaver Park have ended, this park is an important migration stopover for many bird species that you might not see at other parks in Champaign-Urbana and is well worth a visit if time permits (see Colin’s post, *Location of the Month* from October: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/our-blog-the-meadowlark-messenger/location-of-the-month-weaver-park>).



Swamp Sparrow. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

Crystal Lake Park, Urbana, Champaign, Illinois

October 15, 2023 7:37 am – 9:20 am

Protocol: Traveling; 1.101 miles; 37 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 9	European Starling 8
Mallard 1	Eastern Bluebird 8
Eurasian Collared-Dove 2	Hermit Thrush 1
Great Blue Heron 2	American Robin 40
Cooper’s Hawk 2	Cedar Waxwing 6
Sharp-shinned/Cooper’s Hawk 1	House Finch 5
Red-tailed Hawk 1	American Goldfinch 35
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 3	Chipping Sparrow 4
Red-bellied Woodpecker 2	Dark-eyed Junco 3
Downy Woodpecker 1	White-crowned Sparrow 5
Northern Flicker 4	White-throated Sparrow 30
Eastern Phoebe 3	Song Sparrow 3
Blue-headed Vireo 2	Lincoln’s Sparrow 1
Blue Jay 4	Swamp Sparrow 2
American Crow 5	Red-winged Blackbird 6
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 30	Nashville Warbler 2
Golden-crowned Kinglet 15	Palm Warbler 1
White-breasted Nuthatch 1	Yellow-rumped Warbler 25
House Wren 1	Northern Cardinal 3

Weaver Park, Urbana, Champaign, Illinois

October 14, 2023, 7:34 am – 9:34 am

Protocol: Traveling; 1.874 miles; 41 species

Canada Goose 50	Eastern Bluebird 4
Wood Duck 1	American Robin 20
Blue-winged Teal 1	American Pipit 2
Northern Shoveler 9	House Finch 6
Northern Pintail 4	Purple Finch 1
Green-winged Teal 15	American Goldfinch 25
Rock Pigeon (feral pigeon) 2	Chipping Sparrow 40
Mourning Dove 1	White-crowned Sparrow 15
Killdeer 1	White-throated Sparrow 20
Turkey Vulture 2	Savannah Sparrow 1
Cooper’s Hawk 2	Song Sparrow 6
Red-tailed Hawk 1	Lincoln’s Sparrow 5
Belted Kingfisher 1	Swamp Sparrow 2
Red-bellied Woodpecker 1	Red-winged Blackbird 15
Northern Flicker 11	Common Grackle 4
Eastern Phoebe 1	Orange-crowned Warbler 3
Blue Jay 8	Nashville Warbler 2
American Crow 5	Palm Warbler 1
Tree Swallow 30	Yellow-rumped Warbler 2
Marsh Wren 1	Northern Cardinal 1
European Starling 20	

Birdnotes Listserv



Join our Birdnotes Listserv to get the latest local bird sightings in your inbox!

Visit our [Stay Connected](#) page and click the “Join Birdnotes” button.

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.



Audubon

The Champaign County Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.