



# The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

## May Program

### The History of 50 Years of Illinois Spring Bird Count Data

Thursday, May 9; 7:00 pm  
Urbana Free Library



Tara Beveroth will present “The History of 50 Years of Illinois Spring Bird Count Data” at the Urbana Free Library. Tara Beveroth is an avian ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. Her work involves collaborating with a group of dynamic researchers to look at the effects of landscape changes and farming practices on bird, plant, and insect communities in forests, grasslands, and wetlands in Illinois. She also coordinates or co-coordinates multiple citizen science programs, including the Illinois Spring Bird Count, Monitoring of Owls and Nightjars Program, project MOON, and more recently the Illinois Breeding Bird Survey. In 2019, she also started a local migratory bird banding station that she operates with the assistance of fellow University of Illinois staff, graduate students, and sometimes undergraduate students.

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

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**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
- Susan Pollock

**Committee Chairs**

- Bylaws: Roger Digges
- Conservation: Zachary Sutton
- Education: Janet Enos
- Field Trip: Aerin Tedesco; Beth Chato, Colin Dobson
- Finance: (vacant)
- Membership: Brock Martin
- Program: Elizabeth Rodriguez
- Communications: Colin Dobson (Chair); Jeff Bryant (Birdnotes Listserv), Susan Pollock (newsletter), Megan Skrip (webmaster)

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](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org)

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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.

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**Field Notes**

*Aerin Tedesco, CCAS Field Trip Chair*

More and more spring migrants are coming our way, and we are getting really excited to see them all again!

Join us on Saturday, April 27 at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, one of the premier birding spots in Champaign County! Space is limited so [sign up](#) soon (<https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/events-calendar/>)!

We are also thrilled about our Spring Bird-a-Thon, taking place Sunday, May 5 through Sunday, May 12! Teams from the park districts will see who can see the most species on their properties and raise money for CCAS! Be on the lookout for guided bird walks on some of these properties to promote the event and see some great birds in our area! To learn more about the Bird-a-thon, visit <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/spring-birdathon>.



*Killdeer (left) and Lesser Yellowlegs (right). Photos by Jeff Bryant.*

**Welcome, New Members!**  
*Jennifer Hines\*, Steven Ogle\*, Juan Pinto, Jim Zivec\**

**Renewing Members**  
*Andrea Bretl\*, Nancy Coombs\*, Chris and Louise Johns*

*\*Thanks to these members for donation with dues.*



## Bird of the Month

*Roger Digges, CCAS Vice President*

Last month I introduced the first flycatcher in this series, the Eastern Phoebe. This month I present the first member of the warbler family. Warblers are small, very active, often colorful (especially males), insect eaters. Spring is a great time to find warblers, as many migrate through our area; males are wearing their distinctive breeding plumages, and trees haven't fully leafed out. But catching a good look at warblers



*Common Yellowthroat. Photo by Jeff Bryant.*

can still be difficult. Unlike the Eastern Phoebe, which sits on a perch waiting for an insect to fly by, most warblers move constantly, flitting from leaf to leaf, gleaning insects from their surface. By the time one gets binoculars trained on where they saw the warbler, the bird has often moved on. Since a number of warblers feed high in trees, birders may also develop “warbler neck” from looking so high up. It may take considerable patience and perseverance to see them. I highly recommend participating in the Champaign County Audubon Society’s Sunday morning spring bird walks as a great way to learn the skills of finding and identifying many of the 35 species of warbler that have been seen in our area.

Though viewing warblers can be difficult, to introduce the warbler family this month, I chose a bird more likely to stay still for a while, which perch low enough that you won't get warbler neck, and are the most common warbler to nest in our area. According to allaboutbirds.org, “**Common Yellowthroats** live in thick, tangled vegetation in a wide range of habitats—from wetlands

to prairies to pine forests—across North America.” As frequent walkers at Meadowbrook Park in Urbana, my wife Cathy and I hear and see them throughout late spring and summer. Males are quite striking with olive backs, bright yellow throats (hence the name), and a black mask. Although evolution has made the female plumage much less noticeable, as they lack the male's distinctive black mask, they still have yellow throats. While yellowthroats prefer to stay hidden, you can easily hear the males' wicity-wicity-wicity song that can tell you where to find them. Some perch high enough to be easily seen if, as with all warblers, you are patient and persevere.

After they mate, female yellowthroats take 4 to 5 days to build a well-hidden nest near the ground in dense vegetation. She incubates 1 to 6 eggs for 12 days while she is fed by her mate. Their young leave the nest after another 12 days. While Brown-headed Cowbirds often lay their eggs in common yellowthroat nests, as they do those of many other birds, yellowthroats have lived with them long enough to have developed some strategies. They may abandon a parasitized nest or even build another nest right on top of it.

Unless you have a large area of pasture or other dense vegetation near your house, you are unlikely to be able to attract Common Yellowthroats to your property. But you can advocate for protecting places they use and visit those places.

How are Common Yellowthroats doing? According to the North American Breeding Bird survey, their numbers declined 26% between 1966 and 2019, likely due to habitat loss and pesticide use. Fortunately, there are still about 77 million of them in North America.



*Common Yellowthroat. Photo by Jeff Bryant.*

## Coming Events

See our online calendar for more info: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/all-events>.

### Sunday Morning Bird Walks

*Sundays, March 3–May 26; 7:30–9:00 am  
Anita Purves Nature Center, Urbana*

All ages and skill levels welcome. Meet in the parking lot at Anita Purves Nature Center, and walk with Champaign County Audubon Society leaders to search for birds in Busey Woods and Crystal Lake Park. Learn and practice basic bird watching and identification techniques. Bring a pair of binoculars or borrow a pair from CCAS at the beginning of the walk. If a later arrival works better for your schedule, please feel welcome to seek out and join the group on these informal walks.

### Illinois Spring Bird Count

*Saturday, May 4*

Illinois Spring Bird Count (SBC) was initiated by the IDNR in 1975. Join a team or put together one of your own to benefit science. If you are interested in participating, please contact Beth Chato ([ejchato@gmail.com](mailto:ejchato@gmail.com)). For more info, see <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>.



*Prothonotary Warbler. Photo by Jeff Bryant.*

### Native Plant Festival and Sale

*Saturday, May 4; 9:00 am–3:00 pm  
Parkland College*

This Native Plant Festival and Sale aims to provide the resources for people to establish their own pollinator gardens. There will be educational booths with conservation experts, workshops centering around the environment, and vendors selling products related to native plants. For more info: <https://gwendolynhappstude.wixsite.com/nativeplantfestival>.

## Native Plant Festival & Sale

**Saturday, May 4th | 9am until 3pm**  
**Parkland College | 2400 W Bradley Ave,  
Champaign, IL 61821**

- Shop for native plants
- Meet with local conservation experts
- Attend an environmental-focused workshop
- Learn about pollinators
- Hands-on activities
- Craft and honey vendors
- Food trucks & more!

For more information scan this QR code!

### *Meadowbrook: A History Walking Tour*

*Saturday, May 11, 2–4 pm  
Meadowbrook Park Garden Pavilion (Race St.)*

A new book, *Meadowbrook: A History* by Roger Digges, tells the story of how the Urbana Park District turned a farm into an iconic park that provides a unique blend of nature, art, recreation, and learning. Join this walking tour, led by Roger Digges, CCAS vice president, to witness firsthand Meadowbrook Park’s rich history. For more info, see program guide at <https://www.urbanaparks.org/programs/nature-programs/>



*Pine Warbler. Photo by Jeff Bryant.*



## Spring Bird-a-Thon

May 5–12

Held each year in May, the Bird-a-Thon is our annual fundraiser. It starts the Sunday after the Illinois Spring Bird Count and lasts one week.

### Your pledges needed!

During the Bird-a-Thon, teams eagerly search for as many bird species they can find. Form your own team, go where you'd like, and collect pledges from friends! Or choose a team and pledge your support! Contact Aerin Tedesco ([aerintedesco@gmail.com](mailto:aerintedesco@gmail.com)), our field trip chair, for details.

### Where will my donation go?

Your Bird-a-Thon contributions go toward the CCAS Community-Supported Fund for Research, Education, and Conservation.

Since 1982, the fund has supported over \$40,000 in research projects on Illinois birds through our Kendeigh Grants for Ornithology Research. Research topics have ranged from the impact of cowbird nest predation to the varied problems of declining grassland birds. Many grant recipients have gone on to prestigious careers in the field of natural history. The fund also supports our Mini-Grants for Educators program, which has funded over \$20,000 in educational projects in Champaign County since 2006, as well as conservation projects in our area.

For more info: <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/spring-birdathon>.

### Next CCAS Board Meeting

Monday, May 20, 7:00 pm

All CCAS members are welcome to attend board meetings; if you are interested in how to join, please email [mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org](mailto:mail@champaigncountyaudubon.org).



## Gardening 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! Not only do native plants provide fruits and flowers that some birds love, they also support a wide range of nutritious insects on which many birds rely, especially when raising their young.

A lot of information is available to help you choose the most bird-friendly plants for your garden, and CCAS has gathered together our favorite advice and resources to get you started.

To learn more, visit <https://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/garden-for-wildlife>.

# 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 our website.  
[\*Visit our website to join or donate online.\*](#)

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.

Check this box if you would be interested in learning about volunteer opportunities with CCAS.

Check this box if you agree to have your name listed in the CCAS newsletter for giving beyond membership dues.

**I am a new member.**

**I am renewing my membership.**

Make check payable to CCAS and send with this form to: CCAS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803-0882.

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

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## 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.*