



# The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

## May Program

### Queering Sex Determination

Thursday, May 6th, 7pm CT

We're celebrating Pride Month early! Join us on [Zoom](#) for a seminar with Nathan Alexander, a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who studies species distributions, landscape genetics, and population genetics, currently with the plains pocket gopher.

People often incorrectly view sex determination as a simple biological fact, but this conceptualization is oversimplified and inaccurate. We'll push back on these narratives by introducing aspects of sex determination and assignment in humans and wildlife, highlighting the methods, variance, and complexity of sex assignment in wildlife. We hope this work can help counter the recent increase in trans- and intersex-exclusive arguments and

Champaign County Audubon Society Presents

### Queering Sex Determination

Thursday, May 6th at 7PM CST

With Nathan Alexander:  
PhD Candidate, UIUC

Join Via Zoom



legislation, often based in oversimplified beliefs about binary sex assignment and gender identity. Through this presentation, we hope that people will expand their understanding of sex determination to be more expansive and more supportive of intersex and transgender identities with the understanding that science should not gatekeep gender identities. We will approach this through wildlife ecology, genetics, and the social sciences. Please join us on this exploration of the variety and awesomeness of nature!

Follow Nathan on Twitter: [@smammal\\_bio](#)

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](http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/birdwalks-and-programs)

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**Champaign County Audubon Society**

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- Beth Chato
- Jeff Peyton
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- Megan Skrip

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- Field Trip: Nathan Powazki
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- Program: Alida de Flamingh
- Communications: Sara Johnson, Chair. Megan Skrip (Print Newsletter), Carie Nixon (Community Calendars) Brody Dunn (Board Listserv), Jeff Bryant (Birdnotes Listserv)

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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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**

*Nate Powazki, CCAS Field Trip Chair*

While there are still no field trips to report on, spring is here, and as winter continues to fade away, the bird sightings continue to increase! Our second bird walk of the year was dreary, but yielded some success, with an Osprey flyover, along with two Louisiana Waterthrushes, and a Purple Finch singing. In the northern part of the county, four Sandhill Cranes have been seen hanging around the North Waterfowl area at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Over at Homer Lake Forest Preserve, a Great Horned Owl has been nesting in a dead tree, where she can be seen caring for her two young owlets. In the tree next door, a Pileated Woodpecker appears to be starting her own nest! Other signs of spring around the county are many Yellow-rumped Warblers and American Goldfinches back in their breeding plumage. 🌱



*Great Horned Owl and owlets at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. Photos by Emily Williams, Champaign County Forest Preserve District.*

**Welcome, New Members!**  
*George Waltershausen, Sarah Gaulke*

**Thank You, Renewing Members!**  
*Elaine Lutz, Michele Neill, Karen Pruiett*

And special thanks to renewing members who donated above and beyond annual dues:  
*Richard Schicht*

# Upcoming May Events

## Sunday Morning Bird Walks

All Sundays in May, 7:30–9am

Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center parking lot  
FREE! All skill levels and ages — under 15 with adult

Please remember that this spring, we:

- **Require sign-ups** — Please use this form if you fully intend to participate: <https://tinyurl.com/1eohcpsx>

- **Are limiting walks to 10 participants** — If you decide you are unable to attend, please remove your name from the sign-up so someone else can attend! Do not attend if you feel unwell or were potentially exposed to COVID-19. Face masks worn over the mouth and nose, as well as strict adherence to social distancing and COVID-19 guidelines, are required.

Learn more on our website:

[www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/sunday-morning-birdwalks/](http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/sunday-morning-birdwalks/)



Yellow-throated Warbler. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

## Spring Bird Count

May 8th

The Spring Bird Count is a yearly bird count on the Saturday between May 4th and 10th. Each Illinois county has a compiler responsible for recruiting volunteers and assigning them to survey areas.

Volunteers record all birds seen or heard, along with the number of hours they spend “owling” (pre-dawn hours) and looking for birds during the day, as well as the number of miles driven and walked.

If you are interested in participating, please email Beth Chato at [ejchato@gmail.com](mailto:ejchato@gmail.com).

Learn more: <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>

**SPRING  
BIRD COUNT**

**SATURDAY  
MAY 8TH**

The Illinois Spring Bird Count was initiated by the IDNR in 1975. Join a team or put together one of your own to benefit science!

PLEASE LET BETH CHATO  
(EJCHATO@GMAIL.COM)  
KNOW IF YOU ARE AVAILABLE  
AND YOUR PREFERRED AREA.

The next CCAS board meeting is *Monday, May 17th at 7pm CT on Zoom!*  
All CCAS members are welcome to attend. Email [sjohnsonccas@gmail.com](mailto:sjohnsonccas@gmail.com) for connection details.



The Bird-a-Thon is CCAS's annual fundraiser where teams eagerly search for as many bird species as they can find. Pledge donations are based on the number of species seen or a flat amount. Please participate or choose a team and pledge your support!

### Where will my donation go?

Your contributions go toward the CCAS Kendeigh Memorial Fund, which supports ornithological research in Illinois. A successful Bird-a-Thon will support next year's grants and move CCAS toward its dream of a sustaining endowment fund.

### Who's competing in the Bird-a-Thon?

Check out this year's teams, with last year's totals:

- Old-timers Vermilion County  
Jim Smith, Beth Chato — *74 species*
- Urbana Park Rangers & CC Forest Preserve Rangers  
Executive directors and staff — *116 species*
- Homer Hikers  
Peter & Betsy Kuchinke — *54 species*
- The Big Sit  
Helen Parker — *39 species seen from one spot*
- Bird Nerds  
Brock Price & Melissa Ricketts
- Unpleasant and Hawkward  
Sara Johnson & Matt Candelas — *64 species*

Since 1982, S. Charles Kendeigh Research Grants have funded over \$30,000 in research on Illinois birds. Many grant recipients have gone on to prestigious careers in the field of natural history.

### Who was Dr. Kendeigh?

Dr. S. Charles Kendeigh, eminent ornithologist, was a renowned professor of zoology at the University of Illinois. Before retiring in 1973, he had advised a total of 51 doctoral students and 65 master's students.

He was a charter member, president, and board member of CCAS, president of the Wilson Ornithological Society and the Ecological Society of America, vice president of the American Ornithologists Union (now known as the American Ornithological Society), and co-founder of The Nature Conservancy and Animal Behavior Society.

Or form your own team and bird where you'd like!

Learn more:

[www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/bird-counts-and-bird-a-thon/](http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org/bird-counts-and-bird-a-thon/)

# 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.*



Champaign County Audubon Society  
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## A Red-Tail Timeshare: Part II

Megan Skrip, CCAS Member at Large (Twitter: [@Birdology101](https://twitter.com/Birdology101))

In last month's newsletter, I wrote about the annual switcheroo I've witnessed between two species sharing one nest in Champaign County. I guessed that these Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls also swapped a second property, but I didn't know for sure. Thanks to fellow CCAS member Judy Rowen, I now do.

Less than a kilometer away, as the hawk or owl or crow flies, there is another nest, in another pine tree, in similar habitat. For at least the past three years, Judy told me, this nest has alternately hosted hawks and owls in the exact opposite pattern to the one I've observed. This year, it fledged two fluffy owlets. The hawks at the nest I know, meanwhile, were sitting on eggs.

I'll always be grateful for the generosity of fellow birders. Thanks again so much, Judy, for pointing out the second timeshare nest! There's nothing so satisfying as a mystery solved. 



Owlets at the "second location" in 2021. Photo by Brad Scott.