



The Meadowlark Messenger

ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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

April events cancelled!

Champaign County Audubon Society is cancelling all April events due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes the Sunday morning bird walks. We will re-assess the situation at the end of April for our May events.



American Robin. Photo by Jeff Bryant.

Mini Grants for Educators

The Champaign County Audubon Society is offering \$250 mini grants to educators in Champaign County to support environmental education.

Application Deadline: April 10, 2020

Info & Application Form:
ChampaignCountyAudubon.org

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Champaign County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 882, Urbana, IL 61803
ChampaignCountyAudubon.org
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Officers

- President: Brody Dunn
- Vice President: Sara Johnson
- Secretary: Ted Veselsky
- Treasurer: John Dunkelberger (Interim)

Members at Large

- Charlene Anchor
- Carie Nixon
- Jeff Peyton
- Zak Sutton

Committee Chairs

- Bylaws: Roger Digges
- Conservation: Jennifer Wick
- Education: Tyler Owens
- Field Trip: Beth Chato
- Finance: Janet Jokela (Interim)
- Membership: Rachel Vinsel
- Program: (vacant)
- Communicaitons: Sara Johnson, Chair. Carie Nixon, Committee Member (Newsletter & Publicity) Brody Dunn, Committee Member (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.

Get this newsletter in your inbox!

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Find us on Facebook!



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Field Notes

Submitted by: Beth Chato

BIRD SIGHTINGS: Large flocks of Snow and White-fronted geese have been seen in the area. Bald Eagles have begun nesting, and a Great Horned Owl nest was seen. A pair of Kestrels were seen mating. Homer Lake's Red-shouldered Hawks were spotted. A variety of duck species are going through.

On February 18 Riverbend preserve had Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, and Golden-eyed ducks. The Middle Fork Preserve on March 1 had 6 Trumpeter Swans, 500 White-fronted Geese, Wood duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked ducks, Mallards, and 3 Sandhill Cranes.

Red-winged Blackbirds are back, and an Oregon Junco was seen in Champaign. On our first Spring Sunday morning hike we had a Phoebe as well as the resident and winter visitors.

Big changes at Crystal Lake Park

This spring one of our favorite parks will be alive with birdsong and something else; construction equipment. Crystal Lake Park is being renovated.

Starting last summer, several CCAS board members worked on a natural areas panel to review Urbana Park District's plans for the park. We did our best to be a voice for both birds and birders and are happy to report that the park district took our recommendations very seriously.

Crystal Lake Park will be changing quickly and radically. There will be wetland areas, new paths, and new plantings. The lake edge will be re-graded. It will be a better place for all the users of the park when construction is over.

We ask you to be patient while the park regrows. Please remember that what's good for birds isn't always great for birders. The removal of invasive shrubs around the lake edge will hurt warbling for a time, but soon the native shrubs will grow in and offer better food and cover than the Honeysuckle did before it. In the meantime we have the shrubs along the saline branch to hold us over.

Keep an eye out for more updates. We'll try to keep the birding community up to speed on developments.

Calendar of Events

Impacts of the Trump Administration's Rollback of Environmental Protections

A public seminar series sponsored by First Presbyterian Church of Urbana

Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School, and other sources count more than 90 environmental rules and regulations rolled back under Donald Trump. This seminar series will explore impacts of those rollbacks and steps we as concerned citizens can take to help regain the discarded protections.

Sunday, April 5—Impacts on Illinois' Rivers and Streams. Elliot Brinkman, Executive Director of Prairie Rivers Network. Brinkman leads the organization's efforts to protect the state's waters.

Sunday, April 19—Impacts on Endangered Species. Eric T. Freyfogle, Research Professor and Swanlund Chair Emeritus, U. of I. College of Law. Freyfogle serves on the Board of Directors of the National Wildlife Federation. His many books include *Wildlife Law: A Primer* (2d ed. 2019) and *A Good That Transcends: How US Culture Undermines Environmental Reform* (2017).

Sunday, April 26—Impacts on Cleanup of Coal Ash Pits, including Dynege's Pits along Illinois' Middle Fork River. Jennifer Walling, Executive Director, Illinois Environmental Council. In addition to managing the organization, Walling lobbies on behalf IEC's member organizations.

Seminars are held at 11:00 A.M. in the Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church, 602 West Green Street, Urbana. Parking is available in the Orchard Street lot east of the church.

For additional information, contact David Bullock at dsbullock@illinois.edu or the church office at 217-344-5736.

Editor's Note: Please contact David Bullock before attending these events to determine if they have been cancelled.

**Champaign County Audubon Society Members' Bird Walk
April Members' Bird Walk Cancelled!**

**APRIL FIELD TRIP:
Cancelled!**

**Champaign County Audubon Society Board of Directors Meeting
Cancelled!**

**Sunday Morning Bird Walks
Cancelled!**

A note from CCAS president Brody Dunn

The forest understory is beginning to flower. The neighborhood birds are up and singing earlier. Spring is coming, migration is starting. That makes our decision to cancel our March and April events all the more heartbreaking.

We normally tout our demographics as a strength. Where else can you find young students getting up early to happily and voluntarily mingle with parents and grandparents these days? For the time being, our demographics are a major concern. Covid-19 effects those over 50 differently—worse—than those who are under 50. In this town, university students are much more likely to convey the virus than the average citizen, compounding the danger our events may face to the public.

Please be safe and follow the recommendations of local public health officials.

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Brody
L. Brodie Dunn

House Finch Eye Disease

by Jennifer Wick

More than likely, you have heard about the common house finch eye disease, but if you haven't, we compiled some useful information about what you can do if you encounter infected birds at your feeders.

House Finch eye disease, also called Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, is very common and highly contagious among birds, and doesn't only affect house finches. It can also affect the American Goldfinch, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak. Other species are not known to be affected by the disease, and it is not contractible by humans.

There are telltale signs of infection, but it can be difficult to be certain. The disease typically causes red, swollen, and crusty eyes. Sometimes, the eye becomes swollen shut. It can affect one or both eyes, but in most cases, it is not something that birds recover from. The disease causes partial and eventually complete blindness, making the bird exceptionally vulnerable to threats. A bird with diminished vision will have difficulty flying, finding food, and escaping predators.

Obviously, the easiest way to spot an infected bird is to get a good look at their eyes. A quick google image search (discretion advised) will give you a better idea of what this can look like. Generally, one or both eyes will appear red, swollen, and crusty. Since it is not always easy to look closely at a bird's eyes, there are other signs to look for as well. You can also spot it by paying attention to the bird's behavior. An infected bird, due to the fact that it can't see as well, will often hover around feeders for a longer amount of time before they land. Their behavior while on a feeder will also be different. The bird will be less skittish and more likely to be unbothered by other birds, animals, or even people. An infected house finch that I recently encountered didn't move at all as I approached the feeder and got within inches of it.

While there isn't anything we can do to help an infected bird, we can help prevent the spread by

paying close attention to the birds at our feeders. If an infected bird is spotted, the best thing to do is remove the feeder that it visited, discard the seed, and thoroughly clean/disinfect the feeder before putting it back outside. If possible, you can soak the feeder in hot water with vinegar. Another good thing to do is rake the fallen seed around your feeders to help draw away any seed that an infected bird might have touched.

For more information, visit <https://feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/>



Female House Finch showing swollen eyes, a symptom of conjunctivitis.

Photo by Carie Nixon

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 e-mail; 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!

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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
PO Box 882
Urbana, IL 61803-0882



Thanks!

Thank You Donors!

Thank you to all who donated beyond membership dues:

*H. Michael Helfrich, Nancy Morse, Gail Rector,
David Skadden, & Kim Smith*

Thank You Renewing Members!

*Michael J. Machula, Nancy Morse, Lois Rath, Gail
Rector, David Skadden, & Kim Smith*

Welcome New Members!

Kathryn Bulver, H. Michael Helfrich, & Julie Nieset

Questions? Please contact our Membership Chair,
Rachel Vinsel (ccas.membership -at- gmail.com)

Birdnotes Listserve

Join our Birdnotes listserv to get the latest local bird sightings in your inbox! Here's how: go to ChampaignCountyAudubon.org and click on "Go Birding" then click the "Join Birdnotes" button.

