



Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

www.nwilaudubon.org

NIAS MONTHLY MEETINGS

Join us the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. All of our meetings are open to the public.

Most meetings are held at the St John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd., in Freeport.

Most meetings begin at 7PM with announcements, followed by the program at 7:30 and then refreshments.

Check the current newsletter or our website (nwilaudubon.org) for specific monthly details, special events or any changes to the usual time and place.

Please join us!

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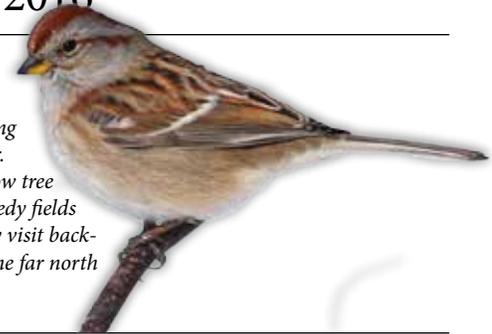
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Top: American Tree Sparrow by Julia W. (Cephas - Wikimedia Commons)
 Text: allaboutbirds.org
 Center: Tricolored Bumble Bee (Bombus ternarius) on Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa) by Dan Barron
 Lower: Aldo Leopold trip to the Rio Gavilan by USFS Region 5 and USDA

February - March 2016

American Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*

Small flocks of American Tree Sparrows hop about on the ground, scrabbling for grass and weed seeds, calling back and forth with a soft, musical twitter. Individuals may perch in the open atop goldenrod stalks or shrubs, or on low tree branches. Look for small flocks of American Tree Sparrows in winter in weedy fields with hedgerows or shrubs, along forest edges, or near marshes. They readily visit backyards, especially if there's a seed feeder. American Tree Sparrows breed in the far north and are rarely seen south of northern Canada in summer.



POLLINATORS OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS

February 2nd at 7:00 PM
NIAS Monthly Meeting
St John United Church of Christ

The program for the evening will be presented by Barbara Williams concerning the topic of pollinators and concentrating on bumble bees.

Barbara managed the biology department at the Burpee Museum of Natural History in Rockford for about a decade. She has been studying and photographing our local bumble bees for several years in addition to pursuing her many other natural history interests.

Our native pollinators are a fascinating and important part of our lives and our ecosystem. Northern Illinois has a lot of different species of native pollinators but many of their populations are declining. This program will acquaint you with some of our bees and show you why and how to lend them a hand and give them a place in your garden.

CHARLES JOHANNSEN PRESENTS "ALDO LEOPOLD AT FAVILLE GROVE"

March 1st at 7:00 PM
NIAS Monthly Meeting
St John United Church of Christ



The program will build on our October 2015 field trip to Aldo Leopold's Shack. Charles Johannsen will show his documentary, Aldo Leopold at Faville Grove. Charles has also produced several videos for Severson Dells Nature Center and is a past president of the Sinnissippi Audubon Society in Rockford.

The film's primary focus is a prairie remnant that is home to wild orchids, about which Leopold wrote a little known essay, "Exit Orchis" in an effort to save the land. Three of Aldo's children, along with others who knew him, discuss the man and his work, giving an intimate, close-up look at an American icon. The film also documents the continuing prairie restoration undertaken by the Madison Audubon Society contiguous to the Faville Prairie.

**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS!**

Betty Mickel – Freeport • Libby Rutherford – Apple River
William and Gayle Steltenpohl – Belvidere

CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS

February 2 - Pollinators of Northern Illinois, NIAS Monthly Meeting, St John United Church of Christ, 7:00 p.m.

February 3 - Wildlife Wednesdays "Bears & other hibernating animals" 10:30 - 11:00 am (see "Kids and Families" for more information)

February 5 - Nicholas Conservatory Field Trip, 10:00 am - 2:30 pm (see "Field Trips" for more information)

February 25 - A 'Conservation Conversation' will be held at Amigo's Restaurant on the corner of Galena and Clark in downtown Freeport. The casual gathering is open to all and begins with supper ordered from the menu at 5:30. Good food and friendly conversation about current environmental and conservation issues is the order of the day. Please join us!

February 27 - Eagle-Watching Field Trip, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (see "Field Trips" for more information)

March 1 - Charles Johannsen presents "Aldo Leopold at Faville Grove", NIAS Monthly Meeting, St John United Church of Christ, 7:00 p.m.

March 2 - Wildlife Wednesdays "Spring Weather" 10:30 to 11:00 am (see "Kids and Families" for more information)

March 8 - NIAS Board meeting at St. John UCC. 7:00 to 9:00 pm

March 12 - Audubon Council of Illinois (ACI) meeting, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Contact Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 for location, agenda and carpooling information. ACI is a coalition of National Audubon chapters in Illinois.

March 13 - Field Trip to see Skunk Cabbage at Franklin Creek State Natural Area (see "Field Trips" for more information)

March 15 - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watches, 7:00 pm (see page 5 for more information)

March 19 - Kids and Families: First day of Spring Hike at Oakdale Nature Preserve 10:00 - 11:30 am (see "Kids and Families" for more information)

March 23 - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watches, 7:00 pm (see page 5 for more information)

March 24 - Our monthly 'Conservation Conversation' at Amigo's (see details on February 25). Both 'newcomers' and 'regulars' are welcome. Please join us!

March 31 - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watches, 7:00 pm (see page 5 for more information)

April 2 - Spring Mississippi River Waterfowl Field Trip. (see "Field Trips" for more information)

April 2 - Draw a Bird Day, Freeport Art Museum 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. (for kids 7 and up)

April 12 - Spring Banquet (see details on page 3)

April 16 - Annual Midwest Crane Count, 5:30-7:30 a.m. Each year our chapter volunteers census cranes in Stephenson county. Details in next newsletter. County coordinator: Mary Blackmore (815) 938-3204.

WANTED: BIRDATHON BIRDERS!

If you enjoy watching birds during the peak of the spring migration, we invite you to join our 2016 Birdathon on Sunday, May 1! Not only is being a Birdathon birder fun, but also it's rewarding. Your efforts help to raise money for several organizations - our chapter included - involved in bird conservation work along the Mississippi Flyway and in Central America, the winter home to many of "our" birds.

The organizations that benefit from Birdathon include: Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, National Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and the Belize Audubon Society. They all work to improve habitat

along the migration route for our feathered friends and provide educational opportunities for the public.

Birdathon participation is easy: get pledges, go birdwatching on Birdathon Day and collect pledges.

GET PLEDGES - Names of Birdathon birders (including yours!) will appear on a pledge form in our next newsletter and on pledge forms at our April banquet. You also may ask anyone you choose - friends, relatives - to make a pledge per species that you will see. A 10¢/species pledge is common, but donors can pledge any amount or simply make a flat donation regardless of how many species you see.

BIRDING - Have a blast on May 1! You can bird alone, with a friend, or join a team (teams vie for the coveted Cardinal-On-A-Stick trophy!). You can bird for a few hours or all day. You can bird in your yard, at a park, or at a series of sites.

COLLECT PLEDGES - Let your sponsors know how many species you saw and how much they owe you, then send your pledge checks to the Audubon treasurer. That's it! Birdathon is easy, fun and rewarding. We hope you can Join us!

If you would like to participate or would like more information, contact:

Kara Gallup
815-871-8014 • karagallup@msn.com
or Mary Blackmore 815-938-3204

N. C. A. A.
(Notable Courtship of Awesome Ascent)

Hormones coursing - Peent!
Nights of singing and dancing.
This is March Madness.

--Mary Blackmore

FIELD TRIPS FEBRUARY - MARCH



NICHOLAS CONSERVATORY FIELD TRIP

Friday, February 5, 2016 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., carpool 10:00 a.m.
Leader: Chris Kruger (815-238-9259)

Take a break from winter! Join us for a guided tour and great lunch at Illinois' third largest conservatory. Location in Rockford along the Rock River, the facility offers tropical plants, water features, sculptures, and seating areas. The annual orchid exhibit includes hundreds of tropical orchids creatively arranged throughout the conservatory. Find more information at nicholasconservatory.com

Call Chris Kruger (815-238-9259) to sign up for this trip and confirm your lunch choices by January 28, 2016.

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 10 am. Expected return time is 2:30 p.m. Admission \$8, Seniors (65+) \$6.

We need around 12 people for the guided tour but are limited to 25 people. Feel free to call after deadline to see if we can accommodate you.

EAGLE-WATCHING FIELD TRIP

Saturday, February 27, 2016 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., carpool 9:00 a.m.
Leader: Laura Dufford (815-541-8958)

Join us to observe populations of wintering bald eagles and other early migrating waterfowl as we travel to Lock and Dam 13 on the Mississippi River. Dress in warm layers and meet at the Staples lot in Freeport at 9am. Bring your binoculars and camera. We will find a restaurant for lunch around noon. Expected return time is 2:00 p.m.

Call Laura Dufford (815-541-8958) if you would like to attend. Sign-up is not mandatory, but helpful in planning the carpool or cancellation due to weather.

SKUNK CABBAGE WALK AT FRANKLIN CREEK

Sunday, March 13, 2016 2:00-3:30 p.m., carpool at 1:00
Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

Join us as we stroll the hard-surfaced paths at the Franklin Creek State Natural Area in northern Lee County looking for that wetland harbinger of spring, Skunk Cabbage. Often heat from the growing Skunk Cabbage melts a circle of snow around the emerging plant.

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 1:00 p.m.; return to Freeport by 4:30 p.m. Predicting plant emergence is an educated guess; be sure to sign up for this trip so that the leader can contact you if cancellation is necessary.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS!

Friday, April 8 - Pasque Flowers at Freeport Prairie

Saturday, April 23 - Horicon Marsh

SPRING MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERFOWL

Saturday, April 2, 2016 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., carpool 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

We invite you to join our group as we look for migrating waterfowl on the Mississippi River. Usually a wide variety of both diving and dabbling ducks are seen, along with grebes, Bald Eagles and some early songbirds. If luck is with us we'll see Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes as well.

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 8:00 a.m. or meet at Spring Lake at 9:00. We'll have lunch in Thomson around noon and then head to Lock and Dam #13. Return to Freeport will be around 4:00 p.m. Call Mary (815-938-3204) to confirm your attendance.



THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SPRING BANQUET

ODONATA - DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES by Marla Garrison

TUESDAY, APRIL 12TH

at HCC with Silent Auction starting at 5:30
Dinner at 6:00 and Program at 7:30

The program will be about the insect order Odonata which includes dragonflies and damselflies. The presenter, Marla Garrison, is a biology faculty member at McHenry County College. She sits on the Executive Council of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas and is the author of Damselflies of Chicagoland. Experience an image intensive, up close and personal presentation of this intriguing, and visually splendid, group of insects. Through macro photography, come explore the Lilliputian world of local dragonfly and damselfly fauna including their basic anatomy, life history, behaviors and diversity. [MEADOWHAWK BY DAN BARRON]

KIDS & FAMILIES

AUDUBON IN THE CLASSROOM

Juliet D'Souza and Nancy Ocken spent a full morning at Empire Grade School on January 5 teaching children about birds and bird beaks. We developed a bird beak presentation with nine stations that can easily travel from school to school. Each station discusses a different bird beak and allows the children to have hands-on experience with tools that mimic a bird beak. The following beaks are discussed: fish-eating, insect-catching, seed-eating, fruit-eating, filter-feeding, chiseling, preying, probing, and nectar-sipping beaks. Real bird specimens were shown for each station as well.

If you would like Audubon in your classroom or know someone who would, please share and send an e-mail to nwilaudubon@gmail.com to set up a visit. (Most appropriate for grade school)

WILDLIFE WEDNESDAYS

10:30 to 11:00 am on first Wednesday of the month

Juliet D'Souza and/or Nancy Ocken, host a monthly series called Wildlife Wednesdays at the Freeport Public Library. During the program, there is a first a special story time followed by an activity related to the theme. Appropriate audience is two- to seven-year olds.

February 3rd "Bears & other hibernating animals"

March 2nd "Spring Weather"

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

First day of Spring Hike at Oakdale Nature Preserve

Saturday, March 19, 10:00 - 11:30 am

Open to ALL ages. Celebrate the first day of spring by being outside! We will provide binoculars for the kids to use to see which birds have returned to the area. We will look for other signs of wildlife and any emerging plant life ready for spring.

Dress appropriately for weather! Sign-ups are encouraged – please use Facebook or call Juliet at 201-233-0946. Call if weather is questionable. Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract, found on the West side of Cranes Grove Road.

Future Events:

April 2 - Draw a Bird Day, Freeport Art Museum

2:00 - 4:30 p.m. (for kids 7 and up)

Visit our Kids and Families section on our webpage at: nwilaudubon.org/kids-families.asp

STORIES FROM PAST KIDS & FAMILIES EVENTS

On December 12, 2015, Juliet D'Souza led a nature walk and bird feeder workshop at Oakdale Nature Preserve. Approximately 18 children and 16 adults attended this 50 degree foggy December day! During the nature walk, we discussed the difference between deciduous trees and evergreen trees and showed the kids lichens, mosses, ferns, and fungi along the way (which would have likely been covered in snow at another time of the year).

The group was lucky to see deer, downy woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, crows, and black-capped chickadees during the hike. Upon return to the Mogle center, the children were shown various species of birds and participated in the different bird calls. Finally, the kids made messy pine cone bird feeders to take home with them. Special thanks to assistant Melissa Entzminger for the set-up and clean-up!



January 9th group - Left to right: Madi Linthakhahn, Lilian Webb, Sarah Webb (mom), hiding behind mom (Temple), Lindsay Swalve.

On January 9, 2016, Juliet led a winter hike at Oakdale Nature Preserve. It was a perfect 32-degree day with light snow falling on our heads. The slushy white snow preserved many great animal tracks and revealed scat for the eight hikers to find.

The hikers were so observant and found tracks of fox, deer, raccoons, coyote, and dogs. They were also lucky to see a rabbit run across their path as well as many species of shelf fungi, lichens, and moss. Also during the hike, the hikers stood quietly on the bridge to listen to the trickle of the water and later underneath the pine trees to enjoy the sound of nature.



KIDS & FAMILIES

WILDLIFE WEDNESDAYS

with Juliet D'Souza and Nancy Ocken

The December theme was about feeding birds in the winter. We read a book about the birds that do not migrate in the winter and then showed the children specimens of the major species that stick around in our area during the winter. After reading, the children learned how to make bird feeders by using pine cones and covering them with sunflower butter and bird seed. It was a messy and fun learning experience!



The January theme was about nest building. We read a few books about the variety of nests, and then showed the children examples of these nests from the Highland Community College collection. Finally, the children left home with bags of alpaca yarn (Leftover from Peggy Badgett's Member's Night presentation), yarn, dryer lint, and grasses to supply the birds in their yard for future nests.

NATURESPEAK

Try to maintain using words about nature around the children in your lives. Give your child opportunities to learn more words concerning nature and less about technology.

This month, try to use the following words and show them examples as you enjoy nature with them:

Ammil (a thin film of ice that covers objects when a freeze follows a partial thaw)

Blinter (Cold dazzle or sparkle, such as the glimmer of winter stars on a clear night or ice-splinters catching low light)

Brood patch (a patch of featherless skin on the underside of birds to provides a means to transfer the heat from blood vessels directly to the eggs when incubating)

Courtship (the behavior of male birds and other animals aimed at attracting a mate)

Equinox (the time at which the sun crosses the celestial equator, when day and night are equal length; September 22 and March 20)

Groundhog (*Marmota monax*, also called Woodchuck; a member of the squirrel family)

Hoarfrost (a grayish-white crystalline deposit of frozen water vapor loosely attached to objects)

Incubate (to sit on eggs in order to keep them warm and bring them to hatching)

Normeothermic (a normal state of temperature, such as an animal returning to its normal body temperature after hibernating for a period of time)

Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*; a foul smelling plant that is able to generate temperatures higher than air temperature to melt its way through frozen ground; this allows it to be one of the first plants to emerge in spring and be pollinated by early carrion-feeding insects)

ELKHORN CREEK WOODCOCK WATCHES

Tuesday, March 15, 7 p.m.

Leader Mary Blackmore 815-938-3204

Wednesday, March 23, 7 p.m.

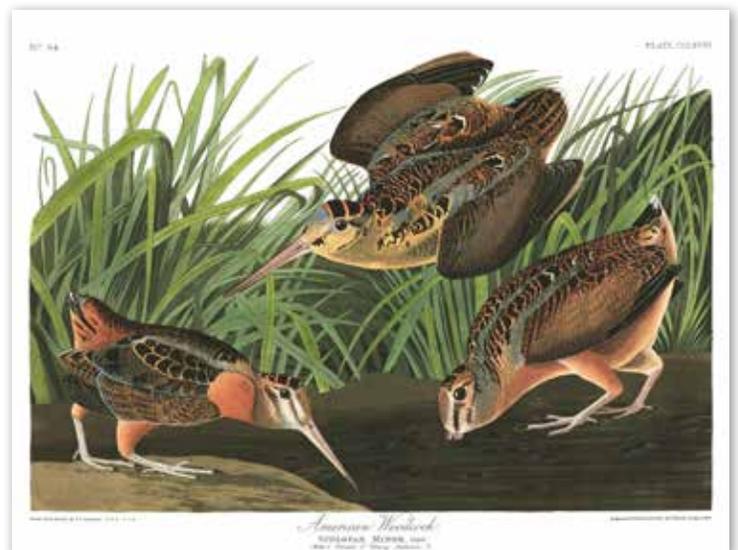
Leader Anne Straight 815- 938-3263

Thursday, March 31, 7 p.m.

Leader Mary Blackmore 815-938-3204

Join us for any or all of these evening outings to watch and listen for American Woodcocks performing their amazing courtship display. The "Sky Dance" itself is part ground-strutting and part flight zig-zagging, barely visible in the early evening sky. More fascinating perhaps are the sounds that go with it, the repetitious vocal "peent!" followed by the twittering and chirping sounds made when air rushes through primary flight feathers during the birds' descent. On a quiet evening it is pure audio magic.

In the past we have had 2-6 woodcocks performing their twilight display for about 2-3 weeks. When and if this begins is an educated guess so be sure to call the listed leader before you make the trip to confirm that the birds are back and that the weather is suitable.



American Woodcock by John J. Audubon

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 6:30 p.m. or meet at the preserve at 7:00. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreton in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Roads. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. Make time to experience this unique avian harbinger of spring. The joy will be all yours.

Member's Night Recap

A review of the January 5th meeting
by Juliet D'Souza

Deb and Bernard Lischwe showed beautiful photos from their recent trip to Peru and discussed the difficult hike that they accomplished for their amazing adventure!

Hannah Badgett showed her talent in bird photography by sharing her favorite photos of birds. As a bird of prey fan, many of her photos were of the raptors that dwell at Schlitz Audubon in Milwaukee.

Peggy Badgett read an excerpt from her self-published book *The Rooster* in the



Hannah Badgett



Bernard Lischwe presented with his wife Deb, but she was at the computer.

Drive-Thru, which can be purchased at the Freeport/Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau. There were many chuckles and smiles in the audience. She also taught everyone how to make bird nest balls using mesh bags and alpaca fur from her farm and provided fur for people to make their own.

John Walt shared amazing photos from his trip to Alaska. He showed photos of glacial ice and the majestic scenery in Alaska.

Finally, the night ended with a slide show of all of the field trips held over the past year. Photographs were provided by Chris Kru-



Peggy and Hannah Badgett



John Walt

ger, Kara Gallup, Anne Straight, and Juliet D'Souza. These photos will also be shared at the annual banquet in April.

Thank you to all who presented!

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Candy Colby
Conservation Chair

The conservation committee met in December to begin planning for "Earth Month" events to be held in April 2016. The goals of these events would be to educate people in Freeport and surrounding communities on environmental issues and hopefully to inspire more people to take action and become more involved.

A number of ideas were discussed. Since we will already have a number of Audubon events planned for April, such as our banquet with special speaker, nature walks, work days, etc., promoting them for "Earth Month" seemed logical. Lynn suggested contacting various groups in the community with similar goals to promote each other's events and has already contacted a number of groups with excellent success, including the Freeport park district,

University of Illinois extension, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, Soil and Water Conservation group and Friends of the Pecatonica River. Juliet is the faculty advisor for the Highland Community College Earth Club. The Earth Club is planning a plant sale for April and this could also be publicized as part of Earth Month events. In addition, a film series is in the planning stages with films being offered free to the public each week for 4 weeks at different locations (possibly the library and Highland College). We have a list of very interesting films in the mix and think this should be an exciting event. Also, Juliet has contacts in the community who are interested in organizing a community clean-up and this would be a great opportunity to connect with other concerned community members. Another idea being considered is organizing a forum of religious leaders in the community to discuss the moral imperative of good stewardship of the planet. This would give us an opportunity to reach out to the faith community and would perhaps be a favorable time, given many denominations having recognized the importance of this, as well as Pope Francis' recent encyclical on environmental stewardship.

Information on future conservation-related events for 2016 will be forthcoming, including possible participation in 350.org events to keep the necessity of dealing with climate change in the forefront. These are exciting times and I know our dedicated Audubon members will be involved as ever.

Many thanks to Lynn, Juliet, Steve, Richard and Hannah for agreeing to participate in the conservation committee. Please feel free to contact me with any further ideas you may have or if you wish to become more involved in any of the planning.

Remember the conservation conversations at Amigo's Restaurant in Freeport every month - good food, good fellowship and a chance to air environmental concerns. This is usually held the fourth Thursday of the month at 5:30 p.m. - check out the NIAS calendar.

Anyone is welcome to join the conservation committee. Please let me know and I'll add your name to the list of contacts.

Candy Colby, Conservation Chair
candacecolby@aol.com | 815-616-8258



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT NEWS

by *Richard Benning*

December 19th was the 40th time that our Freeport count circle has been included in the large scale Christmas Bird Count effort which is a long standing citizen science endeavor. There are over two thousand counts similar to ours in many states and countries all over the Western Hemisphere. The day of our count was a beautiful day weather-wise. The sky was clear with a light west wind and the temperature ranged from 13 to 30 degrees. The previous night's minor weather system had deposited one-half inch of fresh snow on the ground within the northern half of our count circle while leaving the southern half with only a dusting.

Sixteen field counters and seven feeder counters participated by ranging out and about or by watching their bird feeders. All observations must take place within our designated fifteen mile diameter circle and on the day of the count. The count started early for three individuals who did some pre-dawn owling. However no owls responded to efforts to get them to call. After a hearty breakfast at the Spring Grove Restaurant groups set forth to canvas their territories. The tally of all the observations (field and feeders) was 4775 birds representing 35 different species. This is about 1000 birds and three species less than last year. I can offer no explanation for the lower totals other than fluctuating numbers are typical from year to year in Christmas Bird Counts. Long term trends are what the CBC most accurately reveals.

Here are some observations from count day. The top ten species tallied, in order from most numerous down are European Starling, House Sparrow, Canada Goose, American Crow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, and Blue Jay. Two species were seen for the first time ever in our circle; Tundra Swan and Eurasian Collared-Dove. Bald Eagles were observed in four of the five sections of our circle and this was the 12th year in a row we have seen this species. Belted Kingfisher and Tufted Titmouse tallied their highest numbers in the history of our count. On the downside we observed only nine open country ground birds (Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting) this year compared with 262 last year and 1123 two years ago. The question is were they not here on the day of the count or did we just not see them? There is a reason that it is called the Christmas Bird Count and not the Christmas bird census. We also saw the fewest number of Rock Pigeons since 1980.

CBC data can be accessed online at www.christmasbirdcount.org. Keep in mind that much of this year's data may take a while to be posted while it is being submitted and reviewed.

Thank you to the following individuals who participated in the December 19th count. Field counters were Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore, Harlan & Judy Corrie, Juliet D'Souza, Laura & Courtney Dufford, Mark Keister, John & Anita Nienhuis, Dan & Diana Nye, Larry Seffrood, Tim & Teresa Smith and Anne Straight. Feeder counters were Debbie Barron, Somer Bozovsky, Lynn Feaver, Dick Luthin, Dan & Diana Nye and Rebecca Shriver. Thanks also to the Freeport/Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau for providing us with a meeting/lunch room during our mid-day break.

Richard Benning

Christmas Bird Count Freeport, Illinois Count Compiler

Soon all forty years of the count data collected in the Freeport circle will be available online at our website nwilaudubon.org — courtesy of Tim Smith who has created a spreadsheet from our forty years of results. *Thanks Tim.*



Burn Volunteers Wanted

We invite you to get on our contact list for prairie burns this spring. Due to weather factors that can foil even the best-laid plans, we don't schedule burns far in advance. When conditions are right, we call you, and if you're available you join our crew.

Usually you'll get the call 24-48 hours beforehand. The burn season for us typically runs from early March through mid-April. Don't worry if you lack experience. There are tasks on burn days that are fine for novices. Snacks and water are provided, as well as all needed equipment.

To get on the list, sign up at the February or March monthly meetings or call: Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204.

NEW KIOSKS

will soon welcome visitors to both of our Chapter's Ogle County Biodiversity Preserves — Elkhorn Creek south west of Forreston, and Silver Creek, south of Leaf River. The kiosks were constructed by Audubon member and craftsman, Jeremy Dixon. Their permanent informational displays were created by Dan Barron and Mary Blackmore.

Shown here is the kiosk at Elkhorn Creek, with an identical structure ready to install at Silver Creek when weather permits. One side of the display includes a preserve map and some information about the preserve. The other side provides space for a rotating display of the plant and animal diversity likely to be found.

Jeremy Dixon and Lynn Feaver work on installing the large kiosk post brackets. (far right)



Oscar Engel (Mike and Hannah) with Mary Blackmore pose in front of the new E.C.B.P. kiosk after installing new preserve and map graphics.



NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

The National Audubon Society has recently changed its annual renewal policies. In the past, \$15 bought you a National Audubon Society annual membership and as part of the National membership you automatically became a member of our Northwest Illinois Audubon Society (a local chapter of National Audubon). Effective Dec 17, 2015 all National Audubon Society memberships will be \$20.

That means that if you send the previously sufficient \$15 to National, they will simply regard it as a donation and it will not get you an annual national membership or renewal. National is also only accepting annual memberships; they no longer accepting multi-year memberships.

Northwest Illinois Audubon Society will continue to keep our annual membership fee at \$15.00 for folks who want to be a member at the local chapter only. Members who belong just to the local chapter will receive all of the mailings and newsletters from Northwest Illinois Audubon Society but they will not receive the Audubon magazine that is published six times per year by the National Audubon Society.

If you are wondering when your National Audubon Society membership expires, it is printed on the mailing label on this newsletter.

The date printed in the upper left hand corner is the month and year that your National membership will expire. National keeps you on the roster for two months after the expiration date printed on the label, so paying your dues prior to that date will assure that you do not have any lapse in receiving our newsletter.

Below is a chart that we hope further explains some of these membership issues. Please email nwilaudubon@gmail.com, drop us a message on our website or contact Bernard Lischwe, membership chair, if you have any questions or comments.

	NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP	LOCAL ONLY MEMBERSHIP
<i>Receive National Audubon Magazine six times per year</i>	Yes	No
<i>Receive all mailing from Northwest Illinois Audubon Society</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Membership fee</i>	\$20	\$15
<i>Renewal Process</i>	Renewal is only through national	Renewal is \$15 and paid directly to Northwest Illinois Audubon Society
<i>Membership Promotions</i>	If you're not a current member, you can Join as a new member at our meetings or events for 25% off - \$15	No promotion offered
<i>Extra Info</i>	NIAS receives a \$20 one-time credit from National for EACH NEW MEMBER that we generate.	NIAS keeps all the dues money from people who join as Local-Only members
<i>Length of time on mailing roster after membership expires</i>	Two months	Two months

Would you like to join Audubon as a NEW Member or give a GIFT membership?

Two types of membership are available:

1. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and National Membership

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THANK YOU!

• Volunteers who helped process prairie seeds in November:

Randy and Nancy Ocken, John and Anita Nienhuis, Tom and Chris Hartung, Harlan and Judy Corrie, Phyllis and Larry Seffrood, Candy and Jack Colby, Dan and Diana Nye, Mary Blackmore, Melody Farringer, Gay Broocks, Laura Dufford, and Josef Appell.

Special thanks go to John and Anita for hosting both sessions!

• Elkhorn Creek December burn crew volunteers:

Lynn Feaver, Tim Smith, Jeremy Dixon, Richard Benning, Anne Straight and Mary Blackmore.

• Randy and Nancy Ocken, Judy Corrie and Mary Blackmore for overseeding areas at both Elkhorn Creek and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserves.

• Richard Benning for organizing the Christmas Bird Count.

• Mary Blackmore for leading recent field trips.



Mary Blackmore, Rex Sides and Zach Grycan at Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Zach is Director of Stewardship for the Natural Land Institute who holds the conservation easement on the property. Every year there is a review of our easement and a chance to ask questions and get some suggestions about its management. The group, including Lynn Feaver, spent a couple hours walking the property and discussing management possibilities. Photo by Lynn Feaver.

**Northwest Illinois
Audubon Society**

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