



The Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society

Vol. 33, No. 2 Audbirds@aol.com 847-362-5134 Apr/May 2008
<http://www.lakecountyaudubon.org>

General Meeting: Apr. 7, 2008

Bird Identification 201: Moving from Beginner to Intermediate Birder

by Jeff Sundberg, PhD

Lake Forest College

Libertyville Village Hall, 118 W. Cook
Second Floor Meeting Room

You might be (or know) a beginning birder- someone who can usually identify the birds at the feeder, and whose life list has jumped from zero to sixty or eighty or one hundred twenty (more birds than they could name a year ago). Now you want to move to the next step- Intermediate Birder. An I.B. is someone who can identify the common birds (by sight, by call, and sometimes in flight), know when and where to find most of them, and start to distinguish possible rarities from unusually-plumaged common birds. We'll discuss study techniques and birding habits that will help you reach this stage. With some practice, your long-time birding companions will look at you and say "How did you know what that was so fast?"

General Meeting: May. 5, 2008 **Preserving Open Space in Lake County**

by Sarah Surroz

Liberty Prairie Conservancy

Population continues to grow at a rapid pace in Lake County, home of the state's highest concentration of threatened and endangered species. In this presentation you will learn about new efforts—based on proven strategies—to balance growth in Lake County with preservation of natural areas and

farmland. The economic and other benefits of open space will be reviewed and the group will be introduced to the conservation easement—an increasingly popular tool for preserving America's open lands.

The Liberty Prairie Conservancy is a non-profit organization established in 1995. Its mission is to preserve open land, restore natural areas and inspire a commitment to land conservation for the benefit of people and wildlife in Lake County.

www.libertyprairie.org

Our next newsletter will be the September-October issue.

Notice: If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically by e-mail or on our website please let us know. We could save paper, printing and postage costs.

Lake County Audubon Society Expands Bird Walk Outreach

Thanks to a recent grant from National Audubon Society, Lake County Audubon Society has acquired fourteen binoculars, a spotting scope, and multiple copies of Peterson's Eastern Bird identification book. Our goal is to expand already-extensive bird walking opportunities in Lake County. In addition to the traditional Saturday bird walk, we plan to expand to weekdays for those who cannot attend typical Saturday outings. In addition to adults who have flexible daytime schedules, we are hoping to attract small groups of students who might not otherwise have such an opportunity. These would include, but not be limited to, home-schoolers in Lake County.

We will conduct the first bird walk on Saturday, April 19th at Almond Marsh; Wednesday, April 30 at Old School Forest Preserve. Both will begin at 7:30 am. Another will be scheduled at Rollins Savanna in early June, with more to be scheduled as we try to meet the demands of the birding community. Please register if you plan to attend. Contact our email address, audbirds@aol.com or call 847-362-5134.

For a comprehensive bird walk list, see page 2 of this newsletter. If you are on our email list, you will receive timely notices about these events.

ASK AUDUBON

(Audubon Newswire, National Audubon Society Vol. 5, No 8, April 12, 2007)

"What are some ecological tips for trimming my lawn?"

Is the grass greener on the other side? Not if you use ecological lawn care methods. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Over 54 million American homeowners use gas-powered lawn mowers which cause as much as five percent of the nation's air pollution, as well as contribute to global warming. Lawn mowers are not currently equipped with catalytic converters, as cars are, and therefore contribute a disproportionately high amount of pollution to the environment. A 2001 Swedish study concluded that air pollution from an hour of grass cutting with a gasoline powered lawn mower is about the same as that from a 100 mile automobile ride. Roger Westerholm, PhD., of Stockholm University states that the emissions can be reduced by more than 80 percent using a catalytic converter like those used on automobiles.

Stricter emission standards for lawn mowers will be a future reality. As of this year, California is requiring newly manufactured lawn mowers and other small engine devices to have catalytic converters. In addition, many concerned homeowners are switching to electric lawn mowers, which can be either corded or cordless. Electric motors are quieter and need less routine maintenance than gas mowers. For corded mowers it is important to use an electric supplier that minimizes environmental pollution. Vendors in some states such as California, Washington, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Maryland are offering rebate programs, where a gasoline powered mower can be turned in for a rebate on an electric one. Alternative fuel lawn mowers are in the works. Toro Co. has developed a mower which can utilize 20 percent vegetable oil and 80 percent petroleum, (B-20) and expect models that run on pure bio-diesel to be available by 2009.

See http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Healthy_Yard.html for more advice on creating a healthy backyard. By following these tips, the grass will truly be greener in your yard.

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Spring Bird Walk Schedule

(see LCAS website for calendar <http://www.lakecountyaudubon.org>)

MARCH

- 15 McHenry Dam 8AM
- 15 LCAS at Old School, Lot shelter A,B 7:30AM
- 29 Lake-Cook Aud- Lake County Loons 8AM
- 29 Volo Bog 8AM
- 29 WBC-FRG Raptor Show at store, noon-3PM

APRIL

- Heron Watch, Every Saturday at Almond Marsh, 8AM-12PM
- 5 McHenry Dam 8AM
- 5 LCFPD, Woodcocks at Grant Woods, 6:30PM
- 5 WBC-FRG at McHenry Dam/Black Tern Marsh 8AM
- 12 Volo Bog 8AM
- 12 WBC-Lib at Rollins Savanna 8AM
- 19 Lake-Cook Aud- Beginners Birding at Fort Sheridan 8AM
- 19 LCAS @ Almond Marsh 7:30AM + Work Day
- 19 McHenry Dam 8AM
- 19 WBC-FRG at Volo Bog 8AM
- 23 (Wed) LCFPD at Illinois Beach State Park 7AM
- 26 Volo Bog 8AM
- 26 LCFPD Heron Rookery Tour at Almond Marsh 1PM
- 26 WBC-Lib at Middle Fork Savanna 8AM
- 30 (Wed) LCAS at Old School, Lot shelter A,B 7:30AM

MAY

- 1 (Thur) Lake-Cook Aud at Ryerson Woods
- 3 WBC-FRG at Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington 8AM
- 4 Lake-Cook Aud- Bird Banding at Shaw Woods 7:30AM
- 4 LCFPD @ Ryerson Woods 7AM
- 4 LPC @ Reed-Turner Woodland 7-10AM
- 10 LCFPD at Fort Sheridan 7AM
- 10 WBC-Lib at Turner-Reed Woodland 8AM
- 11 Volo Bog 8AM
- 11 LCFPD at Wright Woods 7AM
- 14 (Wed) Lake-Cook Aud at-Daniel Wright Woods 7AM
- 17 Lake-Cook Aud at Skokie Lagoons, Northfield 7:30AM
- 17 Volo Bog 8AM
- 17 WBC-FRG at Wright Woods (meet at Parking Lot), 8AM
- 21 (Wed) LCAS at Wright Woods 7:30AM
- 24 Lake-Cook Aud at-IL Beach State Park, S Unit 7:30AM
- 24 McHenry Dam 8AM
- 31 McHenry Dam 8AM

JUNE

- 1 Lake-Cook Aud at McHenry Dam 7:30AM
- 8 Lake-Cook Aud at Rollins Savanna 7:30AM
- 11 (Wed) LCAS at Wadsworth Restoration Area 7:30AM

JULY

- 16 (Wed) LCAS at Almond Marsh 6PM

WBC-Lib or WBC-FRG= Wild Bird Center, Libertyville or Fox River Grove, 847-573-1450 (walks will start from the store unless indicated) <http://www.wildbird.com/stores/lib/>; LCAS= Lake County Audubon Society, 847-362-5134, <http://www.lakecountyaudubon.com>; Lake-Cook Aud= Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society, 847-831-0331; http://www.lakecookaudubon.org/Home_Page.html; LCFPD= Lake County Forest Preserve District, **reservation and fee required**, 847-968-3321 <http://www.lcfd.org/>; LPC= Liberty Prairie Conservancy, 847-548-5989, **reservation required and fee for non-members**, <http://www.libertyprairie.org/>; Volo Bog State Natural Area + McHenry Dam/Moraine Hills State Park, 815-344-1294 <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R2/VOLOBOG.HTM>

Birdhouse Basics

By Lillian and Don Stokes, Birder's World, October 2007

Cavity-nesting birds are always looking for prime real estate. If you want to attract them to your yard, you better know what's on their shopping list. Most are looking for houses that are well made, the right size, and placed in the right habitat for them.

The right house.

To attract backyard birds, a birdhouse should, in most cases, be wood and unpainted on the inside and either unpainted or painted a neutral color on the outside. Wood 5/8-3/4 inches thick is a good choice, for it will keep birds and eggs from getting too hot or too cold.

Holes or slits for drainage and ventilation should be near the top of the sides and the floor. Perches aren't necessary and may even invite predators of unwanted species. Most important, the front, side or top should open so that you can monitor what's going on inside the house and clean it out. Look for boxes that can open without a screwdriver or toolkit.

The right size

The inside floor should be 4-5 inches square. Allowing about 2-3 inches for the depth of the nest, the distance from the bottom of the entrance hole to the top of the nest should be 3-4 inches.

To determine how big the entrance hole should be, let's look at what happens in the wild: Downy, Hairy and other woodpeckers and chickadees are known as *primary cavity nesters* because they excavate their own holes. Titmice, wrens, bluebirds, some swallows and a few other birds use holes left behind by the primary cavity nesters and are therefore *secondary cavity nesters*. They can't be fussy about the hole size; they take what they can get. Downy holes are about 1 1/4 inches in diameter, and just about the smallest hole that secondary cavity nesters will find in the wild. Many holes are larger.

Most garden birds, including chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, bluebirds and some swallows are very happy with a 1 1/2 inch diameter hole. They may use a larger hole, but so too will many starlings, a nonnative species that can out-compete native birds.

You may also see houses offered with holes as narrow as 1/8 inches. Only the smallest birds-wrens, and sometimes chickadees- can fit in them. Bluebirds and swallows cannot. And neither can House Sparrows, another aggressive, nonnative species that can evict native birds and take over the nest boxes.

The right location

The habitat you chose for your birdhouse will, in part, determine which species you will attract. Tree Swallows like boxes in open areas, especially near water. Chickadees, titmice and nuthatches prefer houses near or in wooded areas. Wrens select nests in shrubby areas and suburban settings.

Bluebirds like houses in the middle of open fields, lawns and pastures- and we really mean the middle. If you want to attract bluebirds, you will increase your chances substantially by placing the house well out in the largest open space you can find. Birdhouses can face any direction. If you have a choice, face them away from prevailing winds. In hot climates, point the entrance holes away from the late afternoon sun.

Dealing with neighbors.

Mount houses on poles about five feet high (so that you can monitor them easily) and place a baffle on each pole to keep raccoons and other predators from climbing up. Ready-made baffles are available, but you can fashion your own out of PVC pipe 4-6 inches in diameter. Cut it to match the height from the ground to the bottom of the birdhouse. Place something like hardware cloth over the top end to prevent a bird from going down. (We paint our pipe forest green to make them less conspicuous.)

If you must mount a box on a tree, place a three-foot-wide strip of galvanized metal around the trunk, while maintaining space for air circulation and tree growth. Some people use a commercially sold plastic tube that fits over the hole of the birdhouse and makes it more difficult for predators to reach the nest inside. It is suggested that some birds, especially bluebirds, are more likely to accept the tube if it is applied after the birds form an attachment to the box and are building their nest or laying their eggs.

Enough said. Once you have placed the right birdhouse in the right habitat and you've taken the right steps to deal with the neighbors, sit back and enjoy. You should have a front-row seat for observing the fascinating family life of birds.

Great Horned Owls

Last year Great Horned Owls nested at Old School Forest Preserve and this year to help continue their productivity, two nesting platforms have been put up in trees. Great Horned Owls typically do not build their own nests, but they use other bird and squirrel nests. One nesting platform is located about 300 yards from the Trails parking lot, the other is north on the path leading from the entrance parking lot not far from the bridge. They are high up so keep a look out. Great Horned Owls start nesting in January and February and you may hear their mating "hoots". A good site to learn more about these birds is at www.owlpages.com/owls.php?genus=Bubo&species=virgianus

GPS and Wood Ducks

The Lake County Forest Preserve Stewards are beginning to take Global Positioning System locations for wood duck boxes located in the county. Locations will be put on maps and help stewards to organize data on box usage.

Wild Bird Center Offers 10% Discount to Audubon Members

Here's a reminder from owner Mike Schudrowitz that Audubon Members are entitled to a 10% discount on seed and suet. "All you have to do is mention your membership," he said recently. His Wild Bird Centers are located in Libertyville in Red Top Center, 1322 S. Milwaukee Avenue and in Fox River Grove at 934 Route 22 at Route 14.

National Audubon Society
Lake County Audubon Society
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Welcome New Members!

There have been 79 new G64 chapter members reported by National Audubon in the period December through January.

We hope to see you soon at a general meeting so come on down! If you attend a meeting and introduce yourself, you will be offered a 50% discount on either a bird house or bird feeder for your yard.

Bird House and Feeder Kits

Houses to accommodate Bluebirds and Wrens and feeders will be available at each meeting of LCAS. The price is \$7 for members and \$10 non-members for houses and \$8 for members and \$11 for non-members for feeders.

National Audubon Membership

New memberships only...sorry not for renewal.
Join or give a gift subscription today at the special
Introductory rate just \$20...43% off the basic rate
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Make checks payable to National Audubon Society.
Dues include \$15 for AUDUBON magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks from receipt of payment to receive your first issue of AUDUBON.

____The National Audubon Society occasionally makes its membership list available to carefully selected organizations whose mailings you might find of interest. To have your name omitted from this list, please check here.

Chapter Code G64 (Lake County Audubon)
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