



The Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society

Vol. 34, No. 4 Audbirds@aol.com 847-362-5134 Nov/Dec 2009
<http://www.lakecountyaudubon.org>

General Meeting: Nov. 2, 2009

Lake County Ravines

Ken Klick,

Restoration Ecologist with the
Lake County Forest Preserves

7:30 PM

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

The ravines bordering Lake Michigan's shoreline from Glencoe to Waukegan protect some of the region's rarest native habitat. Conjuring up images and aromas of the North Woods, Canada mayflower, huckleberry, white pine, and arbor vitae flourish in these sheltered pockets and nowhere else in our region.

This presentation will provide an overview of the unique geologic forces that create our ravines, the unique plants and animals that flourish here, how urbanization affects these ravines, and how the Lake County Forest Preserves and others are restoring these one-of-a-kind habitats of our region.

Ken Klick of the Lake County Forest Preserves will present this program. Ken is the District's lead ecologist for ravine restoration and has been with the District for 15 years. He is an avid naturalist and enjoys birding mostly without binoculars.

General Meeting: Dec. 7, 2009

Project Squirrel

by Steve Sullivan

Curator of Urban Ecology with the
Chicago Academy of Sciences

7:30 PM

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

Tree squirrels can be found throughout our region in habitats ranging from nearly pristine to completely urbanized. Chances are, there are a few that live on your street. Do you know what species they are? Project Squirrel, a partnership of the Notebaert Nature Museum and the University of Illinois at Chicago, is working with citizen scientists of all ages to determine the population size and species distribution of tree squirrels throughout the Chicago Wilderness region as a way to learn more about our urban wilderness.

Steve Sullivan is the Curator of Urban Ecology for the Chicago Academy of Sciences where he works with the institution's century and a half old specimens. Steve will show us why squirrels are important indicator species of ecological processes

in urban areas and will discuss the natural history of tree squirrels in the past and present. His goal is to get everyone excited about urban ecology and maybe even participate in Project Squirrel.

Upcoming Meetings:

February 1 – Bees, Beetles and Butterflies... Why Should We Care About Pollinators by Cyndi Duda, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

March 1 – The Surface Water Resources of Lake County and the Flora and Fauna Within by Mark Pfister, with the Lake County Health Department

March 9– SPECIAL PROGRAM, The Adventures of Lewis & Clark—Birding Along the Lewis & Clark Trail by Brian “Fox” Ellis” /at Ryerson Woods Welcome Center, 7:30 PM (Jointly sponsored with the Lake-Cook Chapter of Illinois Audubon)

April 5 – Birding by Ear by Paul Sweet, with the College of Lake County

May 3 – Bring Them Back Alive: Conserving Illinois' Rarest Butterflies by Doug Taron with the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

What If You Have a Party andEverybody Comes?

By Chris Geiselhart, President, LCAS

The evening of July 22nd was warm, calm, and perfect for viewing the many bird attractions at Almond Marsh. In response to Lake County Audubon's invitation to have “Cheese and Crackers With the Birds,” visitors came to view not only our new, well-camouflaged heron platform but the rest of the heronry. We were rewarded with good views of a number of large blue herons and cormorants along with spotting scope looks at the rare neotropical cormorant that's been visiting the marsh, a black-crowned night heron picking its delicate way through the cat-tails along the edge of the pond, and a variety of ducks. As evening began to approach, small squadrons of egrets flew in from the surrounding area to settle in for the night.

Almost sixty people came; especially rewarding was the number of children who appeared to be attracted by the selection of snacks and birds. Future Audubon-ers, we hope. Listed visitors came from near and far, with distant visitors from Oak Park, Chicago, New York and California. As Almond Marsh becomes better known, we'll more and more appreciate the treasure we have there.

ASK AUDUBON

(Audubon Newswire, National Audubon Society, Vol. 4, No. 20, 10/12/06)

"How should I dispose of OTC or Rx medications?"

Both prescription and over-the-counter drugs -should be disposed of as hazardous waste at the appropriate facilities. The website <http://www.earth911.org> will allow you to search by zip code for nearby hazardous waste disposal centers. Some local pharmacies and hospitals have prescription medicine take-back programs, where they will collect and dispose of the medicines for you. [Check the website of the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) for a schedule of its periodic household chemical waste collections for disposal of medications . <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/swalco/CollectionEvents/HouseholdWasteCollectionEvents.htm>]

Throwing over-the-counter or prescription medicines into the trash or toilet can damage the environment. These substances are not filtered by sewage treatment plants and can harm the bacteria used by the treatment plants to kill hazardous microorganisms. A recent U.S. Geological Survey found pharmaceutical contaminants in U.S. lakes and streams, including nonprescription drugs in 81 percent of the waterbodies tested, antibiotics in 48 percent, and other prescription drugs in 32 percent. These drugs pose a threat to birds and other wildlife that rely on these water sources, and cause risks to us as well.

New Forest Preserves in Lake County: Ethel's Woods

By Don Wilson, LCAS Board member

Ethel's Woods Forest Preserve was purchased by the Lake County Forest Preserve District in 2001. Since this time much of the area has been restored from farm fields to oak savannas and wetlands. The woodland is being managed to remove invasive brush. Parking areas have not been developed, making the area accessible by parking at Raven Glen Forest Preserve to the west and walking in, or by parking on the shoulder of Crawford Road. A formal trail system is in development.

Location

Ethel's Woods is located south of Route 173 between US Highway 45 and Crawford Road in Antioch and Newport Townships.

The Natural Scene

One of the most unique features of this 486 acre Preserve is the 170-acre oak-hickory woodland dominated by century-old burr oak, white oak, shagbark hickory and black walnut trees. A 60-acre serpentine-shaped lake offers a picturesque landscape reminiscent of a north woods setting. On calm days the lake reflects a mirror image of the woodlands.

Scattered throughout the site's woodlands are small, isolated forest ponds that hold water in the spring and early fall. These ponds are used by amphibians in the spring for breeding. Two Advanced Identification (ADID) wetlands bordering the high-quality Old Mill Creek stream corridor are located in Ethel's Woods. Hastings Creek joins the north branch of Mill Creek to

flow into the site's prominent 60-acre Rasmussen Lake. Together these wetlands and woodlands provide valuable wildlife habitat and food sources for a variety of birds, mammals and reptiles. A variety of migratory birds frequent the woods during spring and fall migrations.

Rasmussen Lake in the southern portion of the preserve was formed from the construction of a dam across Old Mill Creek in 1957. The outflow over a concrete spillway creates strong rapids along the stream corridor downstream of the dam. The stream winds through box elder, cottonwood, weeping willow, green ash and other flora. Waterfowl frequently use Rasmussen Lake as a resting area throughout the summer and during migration. It is common to see wood ducks, mallards, and Canada geese resting and feeding on the lake.

The combination of the site's massive woodland and its serpentine-shaped lake offers a picturesque landscape reminiscent of a north woods setting. The site's strategic location to neighboring Raven Glen Forest Preserve offers a direct linkage creating a large, contiguous land holding. Large preserves such as this provide a natural greenway corridor for better land management, wildlife protection and expanded outdoor recreation opportunities.

History

Prior to becoming a forest preserve, the area surrounding the woods and lake was primarily agricultural. Farm roads, old bridges, an old pump house and a field stone Bar B Q can be seen. This new preserve was named Ethel's Woods in honor of the Forest Preserve District's founder, Ethel Untermyer of Riverwoods.

The Birds Are "Raven" About My Feeders

BY Glen Moss, LCAS Board Member

This is the time of the year in the Midwest when many of us start getting ready for winter. For some this means packing up and going to Florida. For most of us, though, it requires putting away lawn furniture, getting the snow blower tuned up and raking leaves as just some of the projects. Add to these a very important one. Clean and overhaul your bird feeders. Check for cracks in plastic that will leak water and promote mold; remove all old feed and sanitize the inside, perches, and other outside surfaces; and be sure to check mounting hardware so your feeder is supported well. Feed storage containers should also be checked for cleanliness and leaks. Replace worn or broken containers with tight-sealing ones that you can easily fill feeders from. Now is also the time to investigate water heating elements if you decide to use one this year. You will want to plan where the power will come from and run it safely. Keeping clean backup feeders stored away may seem like a luxury, but it is easier to change to these feeders during the hardest part of winter than clean the ones in use. When cleaning, wear rubber gloves to keep bacteria from hands getting on the feeders and also keep cleaning solutions from your hands. A common cleaner is 9 parts water to 1 part bleach; or use vinegar. Rinse and dry very well. For those of you who are Snowbirds, be sure to clean the feeders when you get there too!

Songbirds Migrate Three Times Faster than Expected

Birding Briefs -- June 2009, Published: Friday, April 24, 2009

Migrating Purple Martins can fly up to 358 miles (577 km) per day, and Wood Thrushes can cover 168 miles (271 km) per day, according to groundbreaking new research published in February in the journal *Science*. Previous studies estimated songbirds could fly at roughly 93 miles (150 km) per day.

Bridget Stutchbury, a professor of biology at York University in Toronto, and her colleagues from the Purple Martin Conservation Association and the British Antarctic Survey mounted miniaturized geolocators on 14 Wood Thrushes and 20 Purple Martins in Pennsylvania in 2007.

The devices, which weigh about 1.5 grams, measure light continuously, allowing researchers to estimate birds' latitude and longitude by recording sunrise and sunset times. The units tracked the birds' fall migrations to Central America and South America and the journey back to Pennsylvania.

In summer 2008, the scientists recaptured five thrushes and two martins and retrieved their geolocators. Then they reconstructed the individual migration routes and wintering locations.

"This is the first time anyone in the world has been able to map songbird migration routes to the tropics and back," Stutchbury says.

The study found that songbirds' overall migration rate was two to six times more rapid in spring than in fall. For example, one martin took 43 days to reach Brazil during fall migration, but in spring it returned to its breeding colony in only 13 days.

Rapid long-distance movement occurred in both species, says Stutchbury. "We were flabbergasted by the birds' spring return times," she says. "To have a bird leave Brazil on April 12 and be home by the end of the month was just astounding. We always assumed they left sometime in March."

Other researchers are also using the devices, Stutchbury says. "The floodgates are open. I know a group that's putting them on Bobolinks. I know a group that's planning on putting them on Bicknell's Thrushes. Most of the motivation for using these geolocators at the moment is the conservation value."

Cuckoos Home in on Gypsy Moth Outbreaks

Birding Briefs -- June 2009, Published: Friday, April 24, 2009

Yellow- and Black-billed Cuckoo populations appear to increase locally whenever the invasive gypsy moth has a peak breeding year, which happens about once a decade.

The birds prey on gypsy moths, so it would seem logical that when they have more food, they produce more cuckoos. But that's not what's happening, says Nick Barber, a graduate student in biology at the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

"The cuckoo spike takes place during the outbreak, which means the increase isn't due to higher reproductive rates," he says. "If it was just more reproduction, we would see the spike in the year after an outbreak, when the chicks return. The increase instead drops off after an outbreak."

Barber and his colleagues studied Breeding Bird Survey data and maps of gypsy-moth outbreaks to show that while cuckoo abundances within and near an outbreak are above average, a ring of below-average abundance extends for nearly 100 miles in all directions.

After migrating from South America, the birds apparently enter a post-migration nomadic phase in late spring or early summer and stop when they find suitable nesting areas. Places that are loaded with gypsy moths attract cuckoos from miles around.

Barber's research, published in the October 2008 issue of the journal *Ecology*, is one of only a few studies to shed light on how invasive species affect native predatory birds.

U.S. Report on Economic Impact of Birding

A new report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows one of every five Americans watches birds, and in doing so, birdwatchers contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006, the most recent year for which economic data are available. The report, entitled *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*, shows that total participation in birdwatching is strong at 48 million, and remaining at a steady 20 percent of the U.S. population since 1996. Visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website (<http://library.fws.gov/Surveys/birding01.pdf>) to read an overview of the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

Magical Moment

Three days short of mid-September, when the sunlight was starting to make its early evening withdrawal from my veggie garden, I decided it needed some water. Training a fine spray over the tops of the declining tomato plants to reach some newly-planted lettuce seeds, I became aware of a petite burst of movement on the opposite fence. Within seconds, a hummingbird came flashing to the spray, around, over, and through the spray, slowing down to the point where I could see that it was holding its wings out for a good rinse. Only twelve feet away from me, it seemed oblivious to anything except the relief of the water, even dipping its beak into a cup in a tomato leaf that had collected a minute puddle. For more than five minutes, I basked in the pleasure of this rare gift from nature.

If you have had a magical moment with one of nature's creatures and would like to share it with our readers, please send it to audbirds@aol.com.

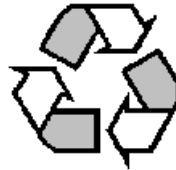
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Bird House and Feeder Kits

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.

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