



# The Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society

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<http://www.lakecountyaudubon.org>

## General Meeting: Oct. 5, 2009

### **Who's Who of Owls**

Presented by

**Mark Spreyer**

**Environmental Ecology, College of Lake County**

**7:30 PM**

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

To some people, owls are symbols of wisdom but to others their hoots are harbingers of death and doom. Join ornithologist Mark Spreyer as he reveals the truth about many of our North American owls and some other birds of prey. Owls' amazing hunting adaptations are explained. Slides and special feathered guests illustrate just who's who!

## Upcoming Meetings:

Welcome to our new program year! You are reading this *Audubon Outlook* because you receive it as part of your membership in the Lake County Audubon Society. Over the last year our goal has been to expand opportunities for members to learn and enjoy the benefits of membership.

We encourage you to attend our monthly meetings, held on the first Monday, and bring others you think would be interested in this year's topics related to Lake County. – Chris Geiselhart, President

**October 5 – Who's Who of Owls by Mark Spreyer, College of Lake County**

**November 2 – Lake County Ravines by Ken Klick, Lake County Forest Preserves**

**December 7 – Project Squirrel by Steve Sullivan, Chicago Academy of Sciences**

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

**March 1 – Lake County Aquatic Wildlife by Mark Pfister, Lake County Health Department**

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

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

## Rookery Update

By Jack Nowak, LCAS Board member

It was a good year for the Herons at Almond Marsh, despite the loss of nesting habitat over the years. The Herons and Cormorants still managed to produce in 28 different nests, one of them being the man-made platform that was erected in February. Herons, which can lay up to 5, sometimes 6 eggs, most of the times have only two to four that make it. This year I noticed many nests with three and four young. The tripod platform produced 5 young that have now since fledged. Because herons don't all nest at the same time, and lay their eggs days apart, there are various stages of young in the rookery and even in the same nests. As of July 8<sup>th</sup> there were still many young herons getting ready to fledge. After the young leave the nest the parents will still feed them for up to two weeks; after that they are on their own. They will hang around the marshes and rivers until sometime in September before they start their migration south.

Many Cormorants are also fledging; recently a rare sighting of a Neotropic Cormorant was made in the early mornings and evenings. If you get a chance, go out to Almond Marsh in Grayslake with your binoculars or scope. You're almost sure to see many types of Herons, Cormorants, Egrets, and various ducks and marsh birds.

## Upper Midwest Regional Audubon Conference

September 18-20 – "Hope, Action and a Sense of Place" – Galena (IL) - Chestnut Mountain Resort. Reserve your room now by calling (800) 397-1320. Rooms are \$99 + tax until 8/19/2009. Sponsored by the Audubon Council of Illinois. Registration contact: Ann Straight. See our website for more information on speakers and programs.

## Audubon Adventures Classrooms

The AUDUBON ADVENTURES Classroom Resource Kit will again be available for use in Lake County schools this year. *Audubon Adventures* is one of Audubon's most successful nature education programs for schools. Designed for students in grades 3-6, it presents scientifically accurate facts in a newspaper style format that is colorful and very appealing to students. If you are interested in obtaining these materials for your classroom, free of charge, please contact us at [audbirds.aol.com](mailto:audbirds.aol.com).

## **Build a Better Brushpile**

By Bob Buttery, Watchers Digest, January-February 2008

Birds love brushpiles. In this day of manicured yards, brushpiles are especially valuable in mitigating the loss of cover and protection of ground-feeding birds such as quail, doves, towhees, thrashers and sparrows from predators such as Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks. My quarter-acre yard in southeast Arizona - in which I've recorded 167 bird species- is designed to provide cover for birds. My brush pile is particularly useful as safe haven from predators and the hot desert sun.

Although some people consider brushpiles unsightly (some home-owner associations actually prohibit them), there's no need for them to be. Placing small branches in a circular pile and then securing and covering them with larger, well-spaced limbs can achieve a neat but natural appearance. This produces a sturdy, domed "construction" that should not be objectionable to even the most critical observer or home-owners association.

The smaller inner branches should not be so dense that they prevent free movement of birds. Similarly, the longer, heavier branches covering them should not be so dense that they prevent easy entry on the fly; they should be just loose enough to keep out hawks and other large predators.

Some people believe brushpiles harbor rattlesnakes, but over the years, I have yet to see a snake in one. The only non-bird users I have seen in them are cottontail rabbits.

Birds are not choosy about a brushpile's appearance. Feeding in and around the pile provides them with an immediate escape cover. These suggestions are based on my experiences and will make your brushpiles safer, more secure and easier for birds to use. They'll also be more aesthetically acceptable to your neighbors. Try one. You will like it, and so will your birds.

### **Donors' Corner**

#### **First Bank of Highland Park Donates**

As part of a fifty year tradition of giving back to the community, First Bank provided customers with the opportunity to name a Chicagoland charity of their choice to receive a \$100.00 donation from the Bank's Foundation. A Highland Park resident, Dorothy Cole, recommended Lake County Audubon Society, and we are very appreciative of her request as well as First Bank of Highland Park's donation.

#### **Far-reaching Interest in Heron Rookery Restoration**

A mid-June article in the Chicago Tribune garnered a number of responses from readers. The most distant was a visitor from Georgia, Sue von Lackum, who was visiting relatives in the area. In addition to joining Lake County Audubon, she made a generous donation to be earmarked for our heron rookery restoration activities. She commented that, "I know there are a lot of charities and organizations vying for our contributions, but one like this just seems so worthwhile."

We encourage others to be locally active by contributing to this effort.

## **New Forest Preserves in Lake**

### **County: Raven Glen**

By Don Wilson, LCAS Board member

#### **Location**

In north-central Lake County between Antioch and Mill Creek is a relatively new forest preserve. The main entrance and parking area is on Route 45 south of Route 173 and north of Miller Road. A second entrance with parking and trail access is located on Route 173 just west of Route 45.

#### **History**

The northern portion of the site was formerly a campground and picnic grove for more than 40 years. It includes Timber Lake, two smaller connected ponds, wetlands, and an oak / hickory grove. There are also several woodland areas near Timber Lake and interspersed throughout the wetland areas along the parcel's northern border. The preserve's southern portion was the former Raven Glen Farm consisting mostly of rolling cropland, a farmstead and a stream. The farm was owned by E.H. Ravenscroft who served for many years on the board of Abbott Laboratories. Ravenscroft purchased the land for Raven Glen Farm in 1935. By 1941, the farm was well-known for its Holstein cattle. Prior to 1998, Raven Glen Farm was used for dairy operations and included several buildings that were once considered state-of-the-art for dairy production during the 1950s and 1960s. All of the farm buildings have been removed.

#### **The Natural Scene**

The most prominent natural features of Raven Glen are 33 acre Timber Lake, a glacial lake with minimal development which supports the a population of rare Iowa darter fish, Hastings Creek, nine high quality wetlands and rolling terrain with oak and hickory groves. The site's largest wetlands are along the northern edge of the preserve.

A variety of grassland and wetland birds inhabit the preserve. Sandhill cranes can be heard from the wetlands in the spring. Red tail hawks and other birds of prey can be seen perching or soaring. Planned restoration of Raven Glen's savanna, prairie, wetlands and streams will enhance the water quality of Timber Lake. It will also improve habitat for wildlife, including grassland bird species like the eastern meadowlark and bobolink, and wetland birds such as great blue herons, egrets and other waterfowl. Dragonflies and damselflies can be found at Timber Lake, the wetlands, and grass lands. The fields support a variety of prairie plants.

#### **Other Features**

The Preserve features two trail systems divided by Timber Lake. A 2.1-mile multi-purpose trail system offers a gravel trail for hiking, bicycling and cross-country skiing, and a separate grass trail for horseback riding only. Raven Glen also features a 0.4-mile woodland walk open to hikers only.

West of Timber Lake and accessible by the west trailhead entrance on Route 173 just west of Savage Road, a 2.12- mile shared trail is open for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.

Raven Glen also offers picnic tables, a water pump, wheelchair-accessible fishing piers, an overlook, a comfort station and a horse trailer parking area.

Ethyl's Woods is located to the east, Redwing Slough to the northwest, and Prairie Streams to the north.

# Declining Birds- Does it Matter?

by Donnie Dann, excerpted from Conservation Alert, V.13, No. 4, July 2009

I have a friend who once asked me (possibly tongue-in-cheek) why I watched birds. After all aren't they little more than noisy flying nuisances that wake him from his sleep, dirty his golf course, car and patio, and add little value for human life on our planet? He then proceeded to ridicule birders like me as out-of-touch oddities who journey into inhospitable habitats at ungodly early hours, in ridiculous looking, equipment laden get-ups engaging in a sport as exciting as watching plants grow.

I don't really believe birds or birders need a defense, but for the cynics out there like my friend let me offer the following. The timing of this Alert is especially appropriate in the wake of Secretary of the Interior Salazar's report earlier this year showing widespread declines in our bird populations. The Secretary pointed out that about one-third of 800 bird species in the United States are in danger of extinction, their numbers dropping precipitously for a variety of reasons: habitat loss, invasive species, polluted water and changing climate. This is to say nothing of the hundreds of millions of birds that die annually because of collisions with glass and towers, predation by free-roaming cats, and the hunt for energy sources such as in the Amazon rainforest and Canada's boreal forests.

In answering the question why it matters, consider what birds do for humans:

- Devour tens of millions, probably billions of mosquitoes and other insect pests
- Pollinate all kinds of plants, including those people eat
- Serve as a crucial part of nature's food chain, such as the predation of hawks and owls on rodents
- Birding engages millions of Americans and is estimated to generate \$45 billion dollars in economic activity each year
- Birds are key indicators of the health of the environment, the proverbial canary in the coal mine, on which we all depend.

These and other reasons aside, birds are most important for the simple reason that they are here. Birds are an essential part of nature's biodiversity, and when birds or for that matter any species go extinct we lose one more part of the natural world's abundance and we are all the poorer for it.

For those of us who are active birders, our senses, physical skills and intellect are continually challenged. These gems of nature exist in every possible habitat, from the Arctic to Antarctica, on oceans, deserts, mountains, grasslands and forests and the wonder of their diversity, song and beauty and the sense of discovery we feel with every newly sighted species is satisfaction and fulfillment that must be experienced to be understood. Further, almost all birders recognize that without adequate protection for birds and their habitats from all the threats mentioned, the morning chorus will be increasingly quieter. Regrettably too many of us are indifferent to birds and nature, and couldn't care less if development destroys the

relatively few wild places that remain, while birders are among our leading conservationists.

Yes, birds and birders matter, and to see what I mean try it for yourself. Grab a pair of binoculars and reconnect with our natural world. All of us will be the better for it.

## The Salton Sea

By Susan Schuler, LCAS Board Member

At one time the Gulf of California extended into what is known as the Inspired Coachella Valleys. A natural dam was then formed through silt deposit off the gulf and resulted in the formation of an ancient sea. Through time, the sea enlarged and formed a dry alkaline basin. In the early 1900s only dry desert shrubs were present where the lake shore is today.

In 1901 Colorado River waters were directed from Yuma, Arizona into Mexico and back into Salton Sea basin for agriculture development. In 1905, failure of a diversion structure caused the Colorado to flow unchecked into the Inspired Valley between 1905 and 1907, creating the Salton Sea. Agriculture drainage and runoff from surrounding mountains now supply the Sea. There is no outlet for the Sea, and water is removed by evaporation. The sea covers over 380 square miles. Width varies from 9 to 15 miles, while the length is 35 miles. There is about 115 miles of shoreline.

In 1930 a refuge was established by President Hoover. The refuge consists of approximately 37,600 acres. Now because of flooding by the Salton Sea there are only 2,200- manageable acres. Dikes are expected to keep the sea for further encroachment. Due to the vast amount of marsh lands that developed over the years, water fowl were attracted to these areas.

Among the many birds that can be seen here are American avocets, black neck stilts, and pintails, green winged teal, eared grebes. Canada geese and snow geese. An endangered species, the Yuma dapper rail, breeds successfully in the habitat that is found at the refuge. The primary purpose of the refuge is to provide habitat for migrating birds and resting water fowl and endangered species. It provides feeding resting and water habitat for a large number of shore birds and supports a diversity of wild life species throughout the year. In 1985 the Salton Sea refuge combined with the Coachella Valley Preserve, establishing a 20,114 acre preserve to protect critical habitat for threatened species due to habitat loss in the fragile desert environment.

## Top Birding Country

As seen in The Wall Street Journal, June 25, 2009

Columbia has 1871 bird species, 50 more than second place Peru. Birding tours are cautiously increasing as guerrilla wars begin to wane. The State Department maintains a travel warning, however, since guerrilla groups are still active.

**National Audubon Society**  
**Lake County Audubon Society**  
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## DATED MATERIAL!!

The National Change of Address policy requires that our address list be accurate in order to avoid expensive returns. In order to avoid an additional processing fee each time we publish the newsletter, we have chosen to add "or Current Resident" to the mailing address

THIS NEWSLETTER WAS PRINTED USING SOY-BASED INK ON PAPER WITH 100% RECYCLED, 100% POST-CONSUMER CONTENT, PROCESSED CHLORINE FREE.



### Welcome New Members!

**There have been 163 new G64 chapter members reported by National Audubon in the period Feb-July.**

**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% new member 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  
Mail your check and this form to:

Lake County Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 332  
Libertyville, Illinois 60048

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

(city) \_\_\_\_\_ Illinois(zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

e-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

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 C9ZG640Z**