

April – May 2017

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Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society (LCAS)



To contact us:

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- 847.362.5134

Articles:

- Date to Remember
- Owl Irruptions
- Food for Birds
- Pollen Aiders on the Way
- 7th Biennial Wild Things Conference
- Birds in my Neighborhood Program

Activities:

- April 8 – 8:00am Welcome Back Herons Almond Marsh
- April 22 – 7:30am Nature Walk, Oak Spring Rd. Libertyville
- May 3 – 7:30am Nature Walk Lyons Woods, Waukegan
- May 24 – 7:30am Nature Walk Rollins Savanna
- June 13 – 6:00pm Cheese and Crackers with Herons Almond Marsh

For up-to-date listings, go to
www.lakecountyaudubon.org

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Migrating Birds

General Meeting: Monday, April 3, 7:30 PM Libertyville Village Hall 2nd Floor

Speaker: Doug Stotz

Senior Conservation Ecologist Keller Action Center

Field Museum of Natural History

Nearly all the birds that occur around Chicago are migratory. More than half of the birds regularly migrating through Chicago, winter mostly or entirely south of the United States. What happens during the months these birds spend in the Neotropics? Each migratory species has its own unique migration, wintering distribution, and ecological pattern. This presentation will focus on the following: where these migrants winter, what habitats they use, and how these migrants interact with those habitats and the resident avifauna. The threats to the boreal migrants and the habitats they occupy will also be discussed. Doug will also consider what species appear to be most threatened by what is happening on their wintering grounds, and how the different parts of the annual cycle interact in defining the long-term survival of these birds.

Douglas Stotz has been at the Field Museum since 1994 and is a senior conservation ecologist in the Keller Science Action Center. He received his Ph.D. in evolutionary biology from the University of Chicago in 1990. He is a fellow of the American Ornithologists Union and a member of both the North American and South American Checklist Committees. He is active in efforts to preserve biodiversity and threatened habitats, both in the Chicago region and in other countries. In Chicago, he focuses on bird migration and the effects of climate change on bird populations and is Climate Change Task Force co-chair for Chicago Wilderness. He also does research in South America. As part of the Field Museum's tropical Rapid Inventory teams, he has participated in 25 inventories in South America and Cuba. He has authored two books: *Birds of Peru*, and *Neotropical Birds: Ecology and Conservation*.

Natural History of Odonata: Dragonflies & Damselflies

General Meeting: Monday, May 1, 7:30 PM Libertyville Village Hall, 2nd Floor

Speaker: Marla Garrison

Biology Instructor at McHenry County College

The insect order Odonata is an ancient group with ancestors dating back over 300 million years to a time when dragonfly-like creatures with two and a half foot wingspans ruled the air. Today these successful aquatic insects represent a diverse group of carnivores with a complex life cycle. The 100 plus species known from Illinois can be excellent wetland indicators and are truly fascinating to observe. Experience an image intensive, up close and personal presentation of this intriguing, and visually splendid, group of insects. Through macro and micro photography, come explore the captivating world of local dragonfly and

damselfly fauna including their anatomy, life history, behaviors and diversity.

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*, a local area field guide available online for free download through Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History <http://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/guides/guide/388>. She conducts field studies and surveys in McHenry County and throughout the state of Illinois.

DATE TO REMEMBER: Saturday April 8th Welcome Back Herons at Almond Marsh

From 8:00am until noon the gates will be opened at Almond Marsh for the kick off viewing of the Great Blue Herons. Coffee, Hot Chocolate, and Goodies will be provided. This program, sponsored by Lake County Audubon Society, will be the start of the Saturday morning viewings until the end of June. Volunteers will be available every Saturday morning with scopes and binoculars to answer questions and provide you with updates on the nesting of the Great Blue Herons and other water birds. The Marsh is located on Almond Road ½ mile south of Rte. 120.

An irruption is defined as a sudden increase in a single animal species. Owls are irruptive migrants and can be spotted in unpredictable places during the winter.



© Emma England

Every year Snowy Owls migrate south from the Arctic, sometimes in small numbers and other times in large irruptions. Illinois has seen two sizeable irruptions recently (2011-2012) and (2013-2014). The winter of 2013-2014 was the largest irruption in the Great Lakes region for maybe a century. Snowy Owls were reported as far south as Bermuda! Snowy Owls are diurnal, meaning that they hunt and are active during the day and night. They are often seen in on the ground in farm fields or in open areas around airports. The Snowy Owl in the photograph was rescued from Chicago O'Hare Airport in 2014 where she was injured. She now lives at Stillman Nature Center in Barrington.

This winter a different owl "invasion" has taken place. Long-Eared Owls have been sighted in unusually high numbers in the Chicago region. A pair were spotted in Lincoln Park. In Lake County there have been sightings at Waukegan Harbor and Rollins Savanna. Long-eared Owls breed in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. They are medium-sized woodland owls with brown, heavily barred plumage. The vertical striations on their feathers match the striated bark of coniferous trees where they are often seen roosting. The Long-eared Owls have yellow eyes, an orange facial disc and long ear tufts which are used for display and

camouflage. They are a nocturnal species of owl and their main prey is voles. If you are lucky enough to see an owl watch it from a distance so that you do not disturb it.

The reasons for owl irruptions are not completely clear. It could be linked to a particularly successful breeding season where the increased number of juveniles means that some migrate south due to increased pressure on territory. Another reason could be food abundance. It is a popular myth that owls migrate south because they are starving, but this is generally not true in most cases. In 2016, Karen Wiebe from the University of Saskatchewan published research that showed Snowy Owls wintering in southern Canada were not emaciated. Indeed, many of the owls actually put on weight over the winter. Wiebe's findings came from detailed data on the body condition of more than 500 wild Snowy Owls trapped and banded on the prairie near Saskatoon over more than a decade. Wiebe's findings are backed up by Snowy Owl wintertime studies elsewhere. At Logan International Airport in Boston, Norman Smith of Massachusetts Audubon says he's banded more than 700 snowies since 1981. He has not experienced a single year where hatch-year owls have showed signs of starvation due to lack of food. Early data from Project SNOWstorm, a three-year-old research initiative that has banded snowies from North Dakota to Maine and is tracking them via GPS, suggests the same.

Food for Birds

by Glen Moss

"Come, buy my bags full of crumbs
Come feed the little birds, show them you care
And you'll be glad if you do
Their young ones are hungry
Their nests are so bare"

The song is well known, popularized by Julie Andrews in the movie "Mary Poppins". But are bags of crumbs and other human food good for birds and other wild animals? The answer is yes and no. Carbohydrates are plant products that yield carbon dioxide and water in the body as a by-product from the sugars and starches stored in the seeds and structure of the plants. Carbohydrates are a source of energy. When natural food is scarce during the winter birds feeding on left over food from humans often absorb an excess of carbohydrates rather than obtaining foods that contain proteins, oils and fats. Milk that has been converted to yogurt or cheese has gone through a process of using a bacterium to convert much of the lactose. Lactose is not good for birds just as many people are lactose intolerant. If you feed yogurt and cheese to your backyard birds, the expense is high. White bread that is stale is often fed to birds, but white bread is poor food for birds because most of the minerals and vitamins are removed to make the flour. Table scraps may not be safe for birds, and they should never be given chocolate. Keep to black oil sunflower seed that is high in fat and good energy, white Proso Millet that is high in protein, peanuts, Nyjer seed, cracked corn and suet cakes. Make bread pudding out of the hard white bread for yourself with lots of good additives like vanilla, raisins and cinnamon and, of course, never feed bread or food with mold to birds.

Pollen Aiders on the Way

by Paul Geiselhart

Four members of our LCAS Chapter got together recently to discuss a new pilot program we're considering. It will focus on providing educational materials about pollinator species and making available pollinator plants with planting instructions. The plants would be distributed to urban plot gardeners.

The initial plants selected are: Common Milkweed, Rough Blazing Star, Bergamot, also known as Beebalm, and Showy Goldenrod. These native flowers are known to attract such pollinators as monarch butterflies, bees, and other important insects.

Developing the educational material would include peoples stories connected with their experiences with these important creatures. If you have a related story, please contact us at our email address, audbirds@aol.com.

Educational materials will stress the importance of pollinator-attracting plants and instructions for care of the specific varieties, which would include soil requirements, moisture, and pollination time.

We are also interested in obtaining photos of local insects that are attracted to pollinator plants and that show how some use the plants to their advantage. If you have such photos, please contact us at the above email address.

We're investigating the availability of grant moneys that would be available to assist with purchase.

Please let us know how you could support our new program.

7th Biennial Wild Things Conference

by Diane Rosenberg

LCAS members were among the 1700 who attended Wild Things, the Chicago Area Conference for People and Nature, which was held at the University of Illinois Chicago campus on 2/18/17. More than 200 dedicated people volunteered their knowledge, time, energy, and resources to present over 100 programs covering an extensive range of topics from Singing Insects, Native Plants Phenological Responses to Changes in Climate and Weather, Blanding's Turtle, A Monach's View of the City: A Geospatial Planning Tool and Social-Science Collaboration, to Chicago's Native Bees.

Emma England, LCAS Board member, presented a program, The BCN Survey: Monitoring Chicagoland's Birds. The focus of her presentation was to encourage and recruit people to help with the expanding bird monitoring program. Recordings of bird songs as well as a list of bird songs and their mnemonics have been developed to help teach people to become effective bird monitors. Training programs are available and new recruits may begin by observing and following experienced monitors. If you'd like to become a part of this critical bird monitoring effort, please contact Emma at bcnsurvey@gmail.com

Jerome McDonnell, host of the NPR program Global Affairs, interviewed Kim Wasserman, the 2013 recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize, for her work in helping the community of Little Village to close down two of the nation's oldest and dirtiest coal fired plants. Community residents were suffering from asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory issues which were linked to the pollutants expelled through smokestacks. "Cloud Factories" was the name the children who live in the Little Village area gave the plant buildings! A Harvard study determined that 40 premature deaths, 550 ER visits, and 2800 asthma attacks per year were caused by the polluted air. Wasserman asked the question, "What are peoples' lives worth?". She emphasized the privilege it is to live in the United States – to have the opportunity to actively engage in environmental work and make a difference in peoples' lives and the health of our planet.

Birds in my Neighborhood Program

by Chris Geiselhart

Are you fond of birds? Do you enjoy working with children in grades 3 through 6? Do you want them to get excited about learning outdoors? Then Audubon's "Birds in My Neighborhood" program might be just right for you.

This volunteer program, its second year in Lake County, provides 2-3 training sessions in how to teach children about birds in nature, especially birds they'd see around where they live. Volunteers are provided with posters and other visual aids for classroom use.

Volunteers would then meet with a class of children three times. The first visit is a classroom lesson that builds on what children already know about birds and expands their knowledge about them. Each child receives a personal nature journal for note taking and research. The second visit is comprised of lesson time spent in the classroom and then an outdoor field trip around the schoolyard looking for birds and sharpening students' observational skills. The third visit is a trip to a local park or forest preserve for extended practice in a more open setting. The field trip is free.

Sponsorship is provided by a grant from Great Lakes Audubon and Openlands.

Please contact Chris Geiselhart at audbirds@aol.com for more information.

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**Lake County
 Audubon Society**

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Lake County Audubon Society Non-Profit Status

We have achieved 501(c)(3) status. What do these sometimes mysterious numbers mean? This status means that we are not only an Illinois non-profit, as we have been, but have received the designation that will enable donors to deduct the value of gifts and property to the Lake County Audubon Society on their Federal Income Tax forms. We are "also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522." Note: Your donation will be used fully towards our mission; our society is all volunteers, there are no administration fees taken out. To enhance the ease of donating online, LCAS has a PayPal account linked to our website. www.lakecountyaudubon.org

National Audubon Society Membership

Join or give a gift subscription today at the special **rate of just \$20**
 Make checks payable to "**Lake County Audubon Society**". Dues include \$15 for AUDUBON magazine. 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.

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