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Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society (LCAS)



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Articles:

**Illinois Tollway Wetland Restoration Project*

**A Bird in the Bush...*

**How Safe is Mist Netting?*

**Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*

General Meetings

Libertyville Village Hall
118 W. Cook Avenue
Second Floor

Monday March 5 7:30 PM
Insects and Plants: an Intricate Relationship

Monday April 2 7:30 PM
**Plants of Concern:
Chicago Botanic Garden**

Monday May 7 7:30 PM
**The Future of Birds:
Are Continuing Declines Inevitable?**

Activities

February 7, 2012
**Audubon in Illinois:
Celebrating the 200th Anniversary** ➔

See our website for an up-to-date listing of birdwalks
www.lakecountyaudubon.org

General Meeting: **December 5 7:30 PM** Libertyville Village Hall

Something to Crow About

Speaker: Paul Sweet, College of Lake County, Hawkwatch Program

Paul Sweet has been investigating the question of whether crows have a social life, especially gatherings with colleagues and relatives. His research into the hypothetical relationship between their social behavior and West Nile virus will provide an intriguing look into their impact on the loss of crows and other birds over the last 15-20 years.

Paul is well known for his long-term involvement with the Hawk Watch program at Illinois Beach State Park. An ornithologist and instructor at the College of Lake County in Grayslake, Paul has been part of an ongoing project that documents frequencies of visits by migrating hawks that can be graphed and statistically analyzed. For more information see <http://bit.ly/phalne>

General Meeting: **February 6 7:30 PM** Libertyville Village Hall

Guess Who's Coming to Your Backyard

Speaker: Seth Magle, Lincoln Park Zoo

Did you ever wonder about the critters that visit your backyard in the dead of night? Join us for Dr. Seth Magle's presentation on Lincoln Park Zoo's *Urban Wildlife Program*. His PowerPoint program will detail how a four county, 30 mile radius, network of cameras is being used to study the effect of urbanization on wildlife. Dr. Magle is an Urban Wildlife Ecologist at the Zoo.

Utilizing Lincoln Park Zoo's diverse scientific specialties, the Urban Wildlife Institute studies the interaction between urban development and the natural ecosystem to develop scientific standards for minimizing conflict between these overlapping areas. Landscape ecology, population biology, epidemiology, endocrinology, veterinary medicine and other core disciplines contribute to an increased understanding of ecosystem health in an urban setting.

The Urban Wildlife Institute aims to use Chicago as a model for urban areas struggling to deal with wildlife relocation, rehabilitation, disease and conflicts and is forming partnerships with local nature and conservation organizations and conducting pilot studies into ecosystem health and human-wildlife interaction.

Seth strongly believes that if rare and imperiled species are to be conserved in our modern world, we must understand and mitigate all potential impacts of cities on wildlife. To that end, he engages in studies of urban wildlife that span a broad range of scientific disciplines, including behavioral ecology, conservation genetics, landscape ecology, environmental education and human dimensions of wildlife. His vision is to help create a world in which human-dominated ecosystems represent an important component of the worldwide conservation of biodiversity. <http://bit.ly/nSRNv5>

SPECIAL JOINT PROGRAM: Lake County Chapter of National Audubon Society and Lake/Cook Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society

Audubon in Illinois: Celebrating the 200th Anniversary

Tuesday, February 7, 2012, College of Lake County Building C Room C005, 7:00pm

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the visit of the famous naturalist and wildlife artist **John James Audubon** to Illinois, we welcome our favorite Performer/Author/Educator Brian "Fox" Ellis in an entirely new show. Listen to tales of Audubon's adventures in Illinois: the stories of birds he painted, his encounters with the Indians, and his epic walk across our state in the spring of 1811. Based on direct quotations from the artist's journals, essays, letters, and three short stories about his time in Illinois, this family-friendly performance features storytelling with images of Audubon's art. See WEB Site for News Release

Illinois Tollway Wetland Restoration Project

by Chris Geiselhart

Last year, members of the Lake County Audubon Society were invited to tour a 160-acre site owned by the State of Illinois and located in North Chicago. The intent was to include us with a larger group of environmentalists to reveal the progress being made on restoration of the property that is located just south of Buckley Road between Rtes. 41 and 43 and east of I-94.

This little-known location was chosen to replace wetlands that were impacted during a recent Tri-State Tollway road-widening project; it was considered a desirable site due to the presence of state protected species as well as high quality wetlands in need of restoration. The property had deteriorated over time to include invasive woody vegetation, which has been 97% cleared by cutting, herbiciding, and burning on site. The Tollway will manage and monitor the site until 2015. Maintenance activities will include a combination of mowing, burning, seeding, and herbicide applications.

One goal of the restoration effort is to allow high quality native plants to thrive in the existing wetlands by providing a sustained water source. Existing drain tiles have been removed to restore hydrology to the site's wetlands. Another goal is to turn over management of the restoration to another entity in 2015.

It was truly amazing to see the difference between our first tour and a recent one held in July. The existing seedbank had begun to grow and create showy bursts of multi-colored native flowers, also known as forbs. Splashes of purple, yellow, white, and orange greeted us, and ducks paddled and quacked around the pond to the south.

At a recent meeting of local educators and a Lake County Forest Preserve representative, there was a lively discussion of ways this property could be used as an education lab. Future uses could include restoration practices and research on threatened and endangered species. More information will be available in the near future as this develops.

Part of this report was adapted from the Illinois Tollway publication *Wetland Restoration Project*. See our website for map of property.



A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand..... By Glen Moss

Steward of Old School Forest Preserve and LCAS board member

You may have noticed circles of fencing around shrubs in Grant Woods, Old School Forest Preserve, Grainger Woods, Rollins Savannah or Lake Carina. These plantings are part of an on-going volunteer effort to enhance biodiversity there by adding habitat to attract more native birds and associates. The shrubs and supplies are part of a Lake County Forest Preserve reforestation plan and have become a part of the bigger plan of restoration of prairies and savannahs to pre-European time. Corporate sponsors have donated some of the shrubs.

While most shrubs can be seen planted in old fields, places that in the past were cropland, Old School has shrubs near wetlands, in wooded areas, and old fields, with each species being specific to the particular habitat.

The shrubs provide food sources, shelter, protection, and nesting sites. Bob-o-links, Eastern Meadowlarks, hummingbirds and goldfinches are examples of birds that are attracted to shrub habitat in the old fields. Two insects that associate with shrubs are bees and butterflies. A small mammal may find protection from a larger animal under a hawthorn or Illinois Rose while attaining a food source from the fruit.

Comparing their advantages to trees, shrubs can withstand drier conditions due to a deeper root system into the soil profile. The shrubs rely less on nutrients above ground compared to trees. Native plants generally need less care and have fewer enemies and survive under stress from extreme weather. Single shrubs and groupings of two or three plants can be found. They rarely will dominate over herbs and grasses so you sometimes need to look carefully to notice them.

So why do these new plantings need to be jailed? In the fall, bucks may remove the velvet from their antlers by rubbing against the shrub. The damage this causes to underlying wood can remove the xylem, phloem, and cambium tissues. These layers carry water, minerals and manufactured food from leaves to roots and roots to leaves. Bucks, like rabbits, may also girdle the shrub at the base, severing the phloem all the way around and causing the shrub to die.

When you see the shrubs being planted, you know that an organized group of volunteers is providing the labor. These groups include corporate volunteers, Boy Scout Eagle project participants, sailors from Great Lakes Naval Training Base, high school classes and clubs, Lions Club International employees, community members and their families to name many.

Would you like to know what shrubs have been planted? Click the link on the Lake County Audubon Society website (www.lakecountyaudubon.org) to see a list of many of the plantings. Include some in your own yard for a natural, attractive habitat.

How safe is mist netting? First large-scale study into bird-capture technique finds little risk to birds

by Matt Mendenhall, Associate Editor, Birdwatching Magazine

Capturing birds in mist nets is one of the most common research methods in field ornithology, but until now, the risks mist nets pose to birds were largely unknown. New research published today finds good news for birds and scientists: Birds are rarely injured or killed by mist nets. Out of 620,997 captures at field stations across the United States and Canada, injuries amounted to 0.59% of captures, while only 0.23% of captures resulted in mortality.

The data came from 22 banding organizations, including Long Point Bird Observatory, New Jersey Audubon, Idaho Bird Observatory, and PRBO Conservation Science. It was compiled in a 10-page paper by [Erica N. Spotswood](#), a Ph.D. student at the University of California at Berkeley, and seven co-authors and published in the British Ecological Society's [*Methods in Ecology and Evolution*](#).

Spotswood first discovered the lack of research into mist netting while applying to study the Gray-green Fruit Dove in French Polynesia. When concerned officials denied her permit and questioned the safety of capturing birds with mist nets, Spotswood realized that no comprehensive study quantifying the frequency of bird injuries during mist netting existed. "I was very surprised to find that no study of this kind existed, because mist netting has been around since the 1950s and is an extremely widely used and common technique for monitoring bird populations," said Spotswood. "In the United States, at least one million new birds are banded each year at several hundred bird observatories around the country."

The data she and her colleagues compiled spans more than 20 years of research and includes 188 species of birds from 31 families.

While injuries and deaths were uncommon, the researchers found a few patterns. Of the 36 most commonly captured species, four species had high rates of incident relative to the mean: Spotted Towhee, Allen's Hummingbird, American Robin, and Western Tanager," they write.

"Spotted Towhees and Allen's Hummingbirds were more prone to stress, whereas Western Tanagers and American Robins were more prone to wing strain." Stress was defined as "birds that were panting or lethargic, closed their eyes during handling, raised feathers, or were put in a box with or without heat to recover before release." The scientists were surprised to discover that birds that were captured more frequently were less at risk than birds that were only captured once. Team members suggest this is because frequently captured birds are more likely to be adults with established territories, which are commonly in better condition than birds that don't have territories.

Finally, the team found that birds that were released with an injury were just as likely to be recaptured as birds without, meaning that injured birds continue to survive in similar numbers to uninjured birds. "A lot of wildlife research requires that animals are captured and handled in order to study populations, demographics, behavior, or movement, yet the process can be stressful to animals," said Spotswood. "For both ethical reasons and the sake of the research, it is important to make absolutely sure any risks are minimized."

"Our study fills in an important gap in understanding by evaluating one of the most commonly used methods in ornithological research. We have shown that when banders follow good practices, incidents are rare. We hope that the results of this paper will be widely read by the banding community and that it will help researchers minimize any risk of incident. *Reprinted with permission*

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Paul Rauber, Sierra Magazine, July/August 2011 Graphic by Peter and Maria Hoey Reprinted with permission



Does eating bananas make you feel guilty? After all, they had to travel thousands of miles to reach your breakfast cereal. But the carbon footprint of a banana is only one-fifth that of a pint of imported beer. How about using plastic bags? It turns out that a paper bag has a carbon footprint two to four times larger than that of its plastic counterpart. These are among the surprising conclusions of Mike Berners-Lee's lively *How Bad Are Bananas?* (Greystone, 2011), which refreshingly fesses up to the "impossibly complex" fuzziness involved in calculating climate impact. A true life cycle analysis includes not only an item's manufacture and transportation but also everything from the extraction of raw materials to a prorated share of the company CEO's mansion. Berners-Lee makes a stab at precise numbers but is mostly concerned with "trying to get the orders of magnitude clear," as shown above.

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Lake County Audubon Society

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Bird House & Feeder Kits

Bird feeder kits will be available at each general meeting of the LCAS. The price is \$8 (members) and \$11 (non-members). Bluebird houses will be available for \$15 (members) and \$18 (non-members).

The Audubon Outlook is looking for a new Editor

- If you are interested in volunteering with a great society and have writing and editing skills, please contact us.