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Audubon Outlook

Newsletter of the Lake County Audubon Society (LCAS)



To contact us:

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Articles:

- Sharing Our Shores
- Watersheds
- Board Members attend Audubon Training Sessions
- Help us Track Sick Birds with Project Feeder Watch
- Bird Murder Mystery Review
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- Great Backyard Bird Count

Activities:

- None at this time

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

Or scan the QR code below



Don't Call Me Hedwig: Snowy Owl Irruptions in the Chicago Area

General Meeting: Monday, Feb. 4, 7:30 pm Libertyville Village Hall 2nd Floor

Speaker: Josh Engel

Owner: Red Hill Birding Company

Every few years, Snowy Owls descend by the thousands into the northern tier of states from their tundra breeding groups. This usually results in more than 100 individuals in Illinois alone, capturing the imagination of birders and non-birders alike. Starting with a basic question--What is a Snowy Owl?--Josh Engel will explore Snowy Owl biology, including the factors behind these irruptions, what makes them so exceptional, and what he learned about their diet from dissecting their pellets. He will also touch on Long-eared Owls and whatever other owls happen to creating news in early February!

Birds have been central to Josh Engel's life for as long as he can remember. He learned that there was something called "birding" at age 12 and pursued it with abandon. His life since has followed birds to all corners of the globe--guiding birding tours and conducting research for The Field Museum--as he's transformed his childhood passion into a career. It has all led to his current endeavor, running his company Red Hill Birding, and organizing and leading birding tours around Illinois, the US, and the world.

Birding the Indiana Dunes and Beyond!

General Meeting: Monday, March 4, 7:30 pm Libertyville Village Hall, 2nd Floor

Speaker: Brad Bumgardner

Executive Director for the Indiana Audubon Society

From Calumet Park to Michigan City Harbor, the Indiana Dunes region is a birder's paradise. From high dune oak forests, restored grasslands, and interdunal wetlands, over 370 species of birds have been found hugging the far south shore of Lake Michigan. Explore the amazing birding just outside the Chicago region and why nearly a thousand people now descend on its annual birding festival each May.

Brad Bumgardner is the executive director for the Indiana Audubon Society and chairs the annual Indiana Dunes Birding Festival. He is the former head naturalist for the Indiana Dunes State Park and has a Bachelors in Science from Purdue University. Brad has been presented the region's top 20 under 40 business leaders award and currently resides with his family in Valparaiso, Indiana.

Sharing Our Shores – Waukegan

by Emma England

Waukegan is a birding hotspot in Lake County and with 292 species of birds sighted it is second only to Illinois Beach State Park in the number of species seen. Emma England has been involved with monitoring the endangered Common Terns and Piping Plovers that nested at the Waukegan dunes area in 2017 and 2018. The dunes also have several other threatened and endangered bird and plant species that are found there. Protecting the Waukegan dunes habitat is crucial to ensure breeding success for endangered bird species and to provide vital stopover habitat for shorebirds that have suffered large population declines in recent years.

As you know, the City of Waukegan was the first in Illinois to declare 2018 the Year of the Bird, and Lake County Audubon Society is excited to be in the process of working with the City to develop a beach stewardship program. The goal of the Sharing Our Shores - Waukegan program is to protect bird species and their habitat through monitoring and educational community outreach. Lake County Audubon is submitting a Memo of Understanding to the city of Waukegan that spells out everyone's responsibilities. Volunteers are crucial to the success for the bird monitoring and public outreach parts of the program, which will run during the late spring and summer months. If you are interested in helping out please let us know. Training will be provided.

Watersheds

by Don Wilson

Watersheds vary in size and were created as the last glacier retreated from Lake County around 15,000 years ago. Watersheds are areas that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river, or lake. If you visualize a watershed, it has an appearance similar to a tree with small branches joining larger branches until the largest branches join the trunk of the tree which represents a river, pond, or lake.

The largest watershed in the United States is the Mississippi River watershed which drains 1.15 million square miles of land. In Lake County one of the larger watersheds is the Des Plaines River which covers 1,455 square miles in southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois. In Lake County there are 10 smaller watersheds known as sub-watersheds that flow into the Des Plaines River. Those watersheds include 240 miles of streams and rivers, 53 named lakes, and 17,000 acres of wetlands. As the Des Plaines River flows out of Lake County, additional watersheds add to the river's flow. Eventually it merges with the Kankakee River to become the Illinois River and then becomes part of the Mississippi River watershed. So theoretically, rain that falls in Grayslake could eventually end up in the Gulf of Mexico via Mill Creek, the Des Plaines River, the Illinois River, and the Mississippi River.

Watersheds are important because they hold and gradually release water, reducing the chance of flooding. They may recharge ground water and filter out pollutants from sources of drinking water. They provide habitat for wildlife and plants, some of which are threatened/endangered. Lakes and rivers provide recreational opportunities and may also be sources of drinking water. Many are aesthetically pleasing and provide places to enjoy nature.

Watersheds need protecting. Water that runs off the land can have adverse effects on the environment when it picks up contaminants. Some contaminants may be degraded or filtered out as they move through the watershed. Those contaminants that are not removed may compromise water quality in streams, rivers, and lakes. Some threats to watersheds are sediments from erosion, excess nutrients from fertilizers and animal waste, failing sewage systems, pesticides, industrial waste water, and development. These threats can destroy aquatic habitats, promote the growth of invasive plant species, and encourage algae and excessive aquatic plant growth resulting in compromised water quality.

Clean, healthy watersheds depend on an informed public to make the right decisions when it comes to the environment. Watersheds are necessary to support the habitat for plants and animals, provide safe drinking water and recreational opportunities, and for the enjoyment of the outdoors. Protection of watersheds is necessary to maintain the well being of all living things now and in the future.

Board Members Attend Audubon Training Session

by Glen Moss

On the weekend of Oct. 19th president Emma England and vice president Glen Moss attended a Great Lakes Audubon gathering in Grand Haven, Michigan to sharpen and learn new skills on advocacy issues and strategic planning. A sample of sessions were: Building relationships with Elected Officials and Establishing Yourself as a Resource; Restoration, Climate Resilience & Volunteer Stewardship; Great Lake Conservation Priorities; Audubon Engagement in Great Lakes Restoration Action Plan; Audubon in The Classroom: Engaging the Next Generation of Conservationists; Building a Climate Watch Team; Being Part of the Public Conversation. David Ringer from National Audubon spoke on The Power of Audubon Network. Garry George, Director of Renewable Energy, spoke on Wind Siting and Renewable Energy in the Great Lakes Region. Opportunities were offered to go on guided birding trips in county and state parks.

Help Us Track Sick Birds With Project FeederWatch

Article from Cornell Lab of Ornithology

House Finches may be found at feeders across much of North America, and if you see these little birds, we'd like to know about it. Specifically, our scientists want to know if the birds you see appear healthy or if they have redness and swelling around the eyes—signs of a bacterial disease (*Mycoplasma gallisepticum*) that first appeared in 1994 and is now found in House Finch populations from coast to coast.

This special push to track both sick and healthy House Finches is being carried out through the Cornell Lab's Project FeederWatch, an annual winter survey of feeder birds that runs from November through April. New participants are invited to sign up to help on the Project FeederWatch website. Making the correct ID is important, so there's additional help provided in distinguishing among similar species, such as the Purple Finch, House Finch, and Cassin's Finch.

"House finches are providing a unique window into disease dynamics," says Wesley Hochachka, Assistant Director of Bird Populations Studies at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "We want to understand how this disease is spreading, if cases are more or less severe than they used to be, and how the birds' immune systems are adapting to fight this threat." Though this disease does not affect people, understanding how it's transmitted provides insight into how human diseases are spread.

House Finch eye disease first appeared in the eastern United States and arrived in parts of the West in 2003. There is evidence suggesting that western bacteria could cause more severe disease now than in the past.

Birder Murder Mystery Review

by Chris Geiselhart

Being snowed in on a cold winter's day can turn my mind to a good book that's a compelling and fast-moving read. A friend introduced me to a series of mysteries that any birder could enjoy. Called "Birder Murder Mysteries," they're written by Canadian author Steve Burrows.

Starting with the first, *A Siege of Bitterns*, each title features a bird's name and its group name designation and is a font of knowledge about birding in the particular setting of each story. The protagonist is a top-notch detective and problem-solver, Dominic Jejeune, brought from Canada to England to beef up the local police department in Norfolk. Over time, the reader is brought down a series of blind alleys of the mystery to be solved, which always involves some aspect of environmental threats to the bird community. A recent review says, "Each book shadows Jejeune as he investigates murders meant to deter environmental-justice campaigns in the United Kingdom and South America. The mystery then builds on a trail of bird-related clues."

The ensuing books, in order, *A Pitying of Doves*, *A Cast of Falcons*, and *A Shimmer of Hummingbirds*, are mostly available at Cook Memorial Library (Libertyville), with the exception of *A Pitying...*, which is available at Arlington Heights Library through the interlibrary loan system. I strongly recommend you read them in order so you can best enjoy the interwoven character development. It's a great combination of features for the birder who loves the challenge of trying to solve a murder mystery before the end of the book. -- *A Tiding of Magpies* (2018) is available from Decatur Public Library (through Cook). A new title is on the horizon: *A Dance of Cranes* (2019).

National Audubon Society has featured Burrows' recent books on their website and says his stories "drive narratives that mystery aficionados, science buffs, and birders can all enjoy." Happy reading!

Fast Facts About Plastic Pollution

By Laura Parker, National Geographic

1. Some 18 billion pounds of plastic waste flows into the oceans every year from coastal regions. That's the equivalent of five grocery bags of plastic trash sitting on every foot of coastline around the world.
2. 40 percent of plastic produced is packaging, used just once and then discarded.
3. Shoppers in the United States use almost one plastic bag per resident per day. Shoppers in Denmark use an average of four plastic bags a year.
4. Nearly half of all plastic ever manufactured has been made since 2000.
5. Half the world's plastics are made in Asia. The lion's share of that—29 percent—is made in China, home to 18 percent of the world's population.
6. Less than a fifth of all plastic is recycled globally. Plastic recycling rates are highest in Europe at 30 percent. China's rate is 25 percent. The United States recycles just 9 percent of its plastic trash.
7. Nearly a million plastic beverage bottles are sold every minute around the world. In 2015, Americans purchased about 346 bottles per person—111 billion plastic beverage bottles in all.
8. About 8 percent of the world's oil production is used to make plastic and power the manufacturing of it. That figure is projected to rise to 20 percent by 2050.

Great Backyard Bird Count – Feb. 15 - 18, 2019

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 15-18, 2019**, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

Go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/> to get started

In 2018, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted more than 6,400 species of birds on more than 180,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your checklist.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

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**Lake County
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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 NATIONAL 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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