Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

February - March 2017

Downy Woodpecker  Picoides pubescens

The active little Downy Woodpecker is a familiar sight at backyard feeders and in parks and woodlots, where it joins flocks of chickadees and nuthatches, barely outsizing them. An often acrobatic forager, this black-and-white woodpecker is at home on tiny branches or balancing on slender plant galls, sycamore seed balls, and suet feeders. Downies and their larger lookalike, the Hairy Woodpecker, are one of the first identification challenges that beginning bird watchers master.

The Downy Woodpecker eats foods that larger woodpeckers cannot reach, such as insects living on or in the stems of weeds. You may see them hammering at goldenrod galls to extract the fly larvae inside.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

MEMBERS NIGHT - PHOTOGRAPHY
7:00 PM Tuesday, February 7th
St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd. Freeport

This night is for YOU to showcase your photos from 2016. Any member can submit and present their favorite photos for this evening.

There are two options:
• No more than 5 photos of favorite birds and/or native plants from 2016 or
• No more than 10 photos from a 2016 vacation

The photos will be compiled into one slideshow for you to present during the program when it is your turn. Please send your name and submissions (with captions) to nwilaudubon@gmail.com by February 1, 2017. If you do not have internet access or e-mail, you are still welcome to bring your photos and can present them at the front table.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

CITIZEN SCIENCE
7:00 PM Tuesday, March 7th
St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd. Freeport

The presenter will be Dan Williams to discuss Citizen Scientist contributions to ornithology. Williams was one of the founding members and later president of the Sinnissippi Audubon Society of Rockford in the early 1970s. He has been involved in the North Central Illinois Ornithology Society, American Birding Association, Burpee Museum of Natural History, Illinois Audubon Society, and Bat Conservation International. He is a current board member of the Natural Land Institute (and former president) and serves on the Land Advisory Council for the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County. He is a retired attorney spending more time than ever on birding adventures.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

James and Pam Richards – Lake Carroll
Don Miller – Rockford
Paul Hasenour – Freeport
Teri Stadjduhar – Davis
Seth Crippen – Freeport
Marian Ewalt – Freeport
FIELD TRIPS

FEBRUARY - MARCH

Eagle Watching Along the Mississippi
Saturday, February 18, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204
Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 9 a.m.
Join us as we look for wintering Bald Eagles and perhaps some early migrating waterfowl around Lock and Dam #13 near Thomson. Dress in warm layers and bring your binoculars and camera.

Carpool as above or meet us at the first parking area on the dike road leading to Lock and Dam #13. We’ll eat lunch in Thomson around noon. Call Mary to confirm your attendance.

Skunk Cabbage at Castle Rock State Park
Saturday, March 18, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204
Carpool from the Forreston Municipal lot at 1:30 p.m.
Finding that wetland harbinger of spring, Skunk Cabbage, is always a delight. Often heat from the growing plant melts a circle of snow around it as it emerges from the ground. This portion of Castle Rock includes the Fell Nature Preserve. A walking stick will be handy as the ground is uneven in this area.

Carpool as above or meet us in the parking lot of the Castle Rock State Park Overlook, about 4 miles south of Oregon on Hwy. 2. Predicting plant emergence is an educated guess; be sure to sign up for this trip so that you can be contacted if cancellation is necessary.

Mississippi River Spring Waterfowl
Saturday, April 1, 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Leader: Anne Straight, 815-938-3263
Carpool from the Forreston Municipal lot at 8 a.m.
Join us as we look for migrating waterfowl on the Mississippi River south of Savanna. Usually a wide variety of both diving and dabbling ducks are seen in all their breeding plumage glory, along with grebes, Bald Eagles and some early songbirds. If luck is with us we’ll see Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes as well.

Carpool as above or meet at Spring Lake at 9 a.m. We’ll have lunch in Thomson around noon and then head to Lock and Dam #13. Call Anne to confirm your attendance.

Questions About Your Membership?
Contact Teresa Smith at 815-238-3963 or timtreetsmith@gmail.com

An Invitation

“Species composition may change, but relationships endure. It is the most authentic facet of the restoration. Here is where our most challenging and most rewarding work lies, in restoring a relationship of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. And love.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer
Braiding Sweetgrass

Years ago as several of us were working at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, I exclaimed in a moment of joy, “I just love this place!” A fellow volunteer looked at me directly and asked, “Why?” Caught off guard I rambled on about the diversity of geology, unique hydrology creating a diversity of plant communities which in turn support a diversity of wildlife. Well, factual as that response was, it didn’t really address love.

In the years since, I’ve thought about that exchange on occasion and have concluded that explanations of love tend to be, perhaps by their very nature, lacking. More interesting to me is how those relationships develop. Time spent in one place in nature creates not only familiarity, but the realization that that familiarity can throw you a curve ball at any time. Something that was “always” there isn’t there one year. Your questions become more numerous than the answers. The beauty brings tears to your eyes. Your work there is an opportunity for reciprocity, to give back to one small area some of what you have taken from the Earth as a whole. Working with your fellow volunteers creates a community of reciprocity, complete with laughter, learning, the exchange of ideas and boundless caring. You receive way more than you give. All of this is interwoven with awe and wonder.

The gigantic full moon rises on one side of the hill while the sun sets in a blaze of red on the other side. American Woodcocks begin their incredible display at dusk as the Western Chorus Frogs quiet down for the night. American Toads loudly pursue their mating rituals. Another blooming Prairie Gentian is found, its deep purple a startling contrast with the dormant grasses – and we seed collectors cheer! Eastern Screech Owls announce their presence on a humid July night. The tiny blooms of Violet Wood Sorrel are sprinkled across the hillside. And one day, there it is . . . the tiny beginnings of a curve ball at any time. Something that was “always” there isn’t there one year. Your questions become more numerous than the answers. The beauty brings tears to your eyes. Your work there is an opportunity for reciprocity, to give back to one small area some of what you have taken from the Earth as a whole. Working with your fellow volunteers creates a community of reciprocity, complete with laughter, learning, the exchange of ideas and boundless caring. You receive way more than you give. All of this is interwoven with awe and wonder.

As 2017 begins, many activities – both work and play – are being planned for our Elkhorn Creek and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserves. I invite you to join us when you can to begin a new relationship, or strengthen one you already have, with these amazing places. We know with certainty that our preserves need us. And you just receive way more than you give. All of this is interwoven with awe and wonder.
Conservation Committee News:

The conservation committee will be planning NAHQ Earth Month activities. We will be hosting an Earth Day event at Oakdale and also will be planning another film series.

As we begin a new year it’s encouraging to remember that there is good news on the environmental front, including President Obama’s designation of the Bears Ears national monument in Utah, protection of large areas of the Atlantic and Arctic from oil drilling, greater expansion of wind and solar installations and, specifically for Illinois, the passage of the Future Energy Jobs Bill.

The Future Energy Jobs bill is seen by some industry observers as the most significant piece of energy legislation passed by a US state in decades. According to the Environmental Defense Funds’ website:

The bill would increase standards to reduce electricity use in Illinois by 28 percent by 2025, a 50 percent increase in savings compared to what would otherwise occur based on current trends. The bill also includes on-bill financing and real-time pricing programs to help more Illinoisans save money.

It would update and extend the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to enable solar and wind energy projects to flourish.

The bill would revise the current RPS to increase the share of power coming from renewable sources to 35 percent by 2030, up from the state’s current standard of 25 percent by 2025. The bill also makes technical fixes to the RPS that energy experts say have become necessary since more customers and municipalities have started purchasing energy from alternative suppliers rather than from utilities.

The bill directs the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to develop a market-based approach to meet the proposed Clean Power Plan, which would set the FIRST-EVER NATIONAL LIMITS ON CARBON POLLUTION from existing power plants. The bill contemplates a cap on emissions coupled with an auction of carbon dioxide emission allowances. The revenues generated by the auction would then be invested in areas such as workforce development, low-income bill assistance, and research and development of new clean energy technology.

VEG NEWS
MAC AND CHEESE
Serves 6

What You Need:
4 quarts water
1 tablespoon salt
8 ounces macaroni (or other pasta)
4 slices of bread, torn into large pieces
2 tablespoons + 1/3 cup non-hydrogenated margarine
1 cup red yellow or orange bell peppers, peeled and chopped
1/2 cup carrots, peeled and chopped
1/3 cup onion, peeled and chopped
1 cup water
1/4 cup raw cashews (soaked at least 2 hours)
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon garlic, minced
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon cayenne
1/2 teaspoon paprika

What You Do:
1. In a large pot, bring the water and salt to a boil. Add macaroni and cook until al dente. In a colander, drain pasta and rinse with cold water. Set aside.
2. In a food processor, make breadcrumbs by pulverizing the bread and 2 tablespoons margarine to a medium-fine texture. Set aside.
3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a saucepan, add potatoes, carrots, onion, and water, and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and simmer for 15 minutes, or until vegetables are very soft.
4. In a blender, process the cashews, salt, garlic, 1/3 cup margarine, mustard, lemon juice, black pepper, and cayenne. Add softened vegetables and cooking water to the blender and process until perfectly smooth.
5. In a large bowl, toss the cooked pasta and blended cheese sauce until completely coated. Spread mixture into a 9 x 13 casserole dish, sprinkle with prepared breadcrumbs, and dust with paprika. Bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese sauce is bubbling and the top has turned golden brown.

From the Veg News E-newsletter.

Audubon in the Library

Fireport Public Library
100 E. Douglas Street, Fireport
Wildlife Wednesday
Appropriate audience is two- to seven-year-olds
10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

An Audubon member hosts a monthly series called Wildlife Wednesdays at the Fireport Public Library. During the program, there is first a special story time followed by an activity related to the theme.

February 1: Animal Courtship
March 1: National Parks

Special National Parks Centennial Program
Targeted for older children
March 17: 3:30 – 4:30 pm
Fireport Public Library

The National Park Service (NPS) turned 100 on August 25, 2016. Juli Medvedev will talk to the kids about the NPS, share the locations of many parks, explain their importance, and help get the kids excited about visiting the parks someday.

She will have activities about exploring federal lands and waters, environmental stewardship, our nation’s native peoples, and citizen science.

Family event: First day of Spring Hike at Oakdale Nature Preserve
Saturday, March 18
10:00 a.m. to approximately 11:30 a.m.

Open to ALL ages. Celebrate the first day of spring by being outside! Juli will provide instructions for the kids to use to see which birds have returned to the area and find the readiest birds as well. We will look for other signs of wildlife and any emerging plant life ready for spring.

Dress appropriately for weather! Signs-ups are encouraged – please use Facebook or call Juli at 201-235-0946. Call if weather is questionable.

Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract, found on the West side of Craig’s Grove Road.

Visit our Kids and Families section on our webpage at: uwalson.org/kids-families.asp

Save the date for an exciting EARTH DAY EVENT on Saturday, April 22 at Oakdale Nature Preserve. More information will be provided in the next newsletter.

KIDS & FAMILIES

WANTED! BIRDATHON BIRDERS!

If you enjoy watching birds during the peak of the spring migration, we invite you to join our 2017 Birdathon on Sunday, May 7! Not only is this a Birdathon birdier fun, but also it’s rewarding. Your efforts help to raise money for several organizations - our chapter included – involved in bird conservation work along the Mississippi Flyway and in Central America, the winter home to many of our birds.

The organizations that benefit from Birdathon include: Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, National Audubon’s Mississippi River Initiative, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and the Balian Audubon Society.

They all work to improve habitat along the migration route for our feathered friends and provide educational opportunities for the public.

Birdathon participation is easy: get pledges, go birdwatching on Birdathon Day and collect pledges.

GET PLEDGES – Names of Birdathon birders (including yours!) will appear on a pledge form in our next newsletter and on pledge forms at our April banquet. You will also want to ask anyone you choose - friends, relatives - to make a pledge per species that you will see.

A 10¢/species pledge is common, but donors can pledge any amount or simply make a flat donation regardless of how many species you see.

BIRDING – Have a blast on May 7! You can bird alone, with a friend, or join a team (teams vie for the coveted Cardinal-O-A-Stick trophy!). You can bird for a few hours or all day. You can bird in your yard, at a park, or at a series of sites.

COLLECT PLEDGES – Let your sponsors know how many species you saw and how much they owe you, then send your pledge checks to the Audubon treasurer. That’s it! Birdathon is easy, fun and rewarding. We hope you can join us!

If you would like to participate or would like more information, contact:
Kara Gallup 815-871-9014 karagallup@msn.com or Mary Blackmore 815-998-3204

Other encouraging environmental news from the States (from Gizmodo.com):

In September, California SB32 decreed the State reduce emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. And the states AB197 creates a legislative committee to monitor the Air Resources Board, an oft-criticized agency in charge of reducing the state’s pollution.

New York went a step further. In June, the State passed a bill to entirely cut emissions from "major sources" -- oil refineries, natural gas storage facilities, pipelines, and more -- by 2050. That means to zero.

As we move into 2017 have you made any New Year’s resolutions for the planet? It’s good for us to remember that even simple steps make a big difference, such as remembering to take those reusable bags when we shop, trying Meatless Mondays, resolving to buy shade grown, bird-friendly coffee, using simpler natural cleaning products, and the list goes on. Together we can change the culture and make the earth better for all creatures!

- Candy Colby, Conservation Chair

Time to Nestle In

Most insects overwinter while in "diapause," seeking cover underground, in leaf litter or in the stems of plants, such as this Goldenrod gall.

From the Veg News E-newsletter.

- Cooper’s Hawk at Highland Community College, by Barbara Hargrave
ELKHORN CREEK WOODCOCK WATCHES

Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204

Wednesday, March 22, 7 p.m.
Leader: Anne Straight, 815-938-3263

Wednesday, March 29, 7 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204

Join us for any or all of these evening outings to watch and listen for American Woodcocks performing their amazing courtship display. The “Sky Dance” itself is part ground-strutting and part flight zig-zagging, barely visible in the early evening sky. More fascinating perhaps are the sounds that go with it, the repetitious vocal "peent!” followed by the twittering and chirping sounds made when air rushes through primary flight feathers during the birds’ descent. On a quiet evening it is pure audio magic.

In the past we have had 2-6 woodcocks performing their twilight display for about 2-3 weeks. When and if this begins is an educated guess so be sure to call the listed leader before you make the trip to confirm that the birds are back and that the weather is suitable.

We invite you to get on our contact list for prairie burns this spring. Due to weather factors that can foil even the best-laid plans, we don’t schedule burns far in advance. When conditions are right, we call you, and if you’re available you join our crew.

Usually you’ll get the call 24-48 hours beforehand. The burn season for us typically runs from early March through mid-April. Don’t worry if you lack experience. There are tasks on burn days that are fine for novices. Snacks and water are provided, as well as all needed equipment.

Would you like to join Audubon as a NEW Member or give a GIFT membership?

Two types of membership are available:

1. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and National Membership includes this local newsletter, local mailings and the national “Audubon” magazine. ___ National Membership $20
   All renewals for national memberships need to use the national membership form.

2. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society Local only Membership includes this newsletter and other mailings from our local chapter. ___ Local Only $15

   Name of new member or gift recipient: ________________________________

   Address: __________________________ City: __________ State: ______ Zip Code: ________

   If this is a gift membership, please indicate the name of the person providing the gift membership: __________________________

   Name: ________________________________

   Make check payable to NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail to: Treasurer, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032

   __________ Local only Membership

   __________ National Membership

THANK YOU!

- November Swalve Prairie stewardship volunteers: Tim and Teresa Smith, Juliet and Adam Moderow, Merry Blake, Nancy Ocken, Mary Blackmore, Anne Straight, Bernard Lischwe, Lynn Feaver, Laura Dufford and Kayse Rushford.
- Prairie seed processing volunteers: John and Anita Niemius, Randy and Nancy Ocken, Judy and Harlan Corrie, Merry Blake, Melody Farringer, Rosie Hooper, Mary Blackmore, Bernard Lischwe, Larry Seffrood and Anne Straight. Special thanks go to John and Anita for hosting those events.
- Silver Creek November stewardship volunteers: Judy and Harlan Corrie, Anne Straight and Mary Blackmore.
- Richard Benning for organizing our Christmas Bird Count and for being the count’s official compiler.
- Recent field trip leaders: Steve Simpson, John Walt and Mary Blackmore.
- Ashish and Kiran Patel for their donation to our chapter in honor of newlyweds Juliet and Adam Moderow.
- Don Miller for his donation to our chapter in honor of Mary Blackmore.
This newsletter was printed on Exact Eco 100 paper. It is made with 100% recycled post-consumer use fiber and is processed chlorine-free.

ADDRESS/EMAILS OF YOUR LEGISLATORS

Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 • State House Switchboard (217) 782-2000
When using either switchboard, simply ask to be connected to the legislator’s office.

FEDERAL

**Senator Richard Durbin**
Kluczynski Building 38th Floor
230 S. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60604
www.durbin.senate.gov/contact.cfm

**Senator Tammy Duckworth**
230 S Dearborn Suite 3900, Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: 312-886-3506
www.duckworth.senate.gov

**16th District Rep. Adam Kinzinger**
628 Columbus Street, Suite 507, Ottawa, IL 61350
https://kinzingerforms.house.gov/email-adam/

**17th District Rep. Cheri Bustos**
100 19th Street, Suite 101, Rock Island, IL 61201
http://bustos.house.gov/contact

STATE

**45th District Sen. Tim Bivins**
50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001, Freeport, IL 61032
senatorbivins@grics.net

**36th District Sen. Neil Anderson**
825 Ave of the Cities - Suite 1, Moline, IL 61265
senatorneilanderson.com/Contact

**89th District Rep. Brian Stewart**
50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001, Freeport, IL 61032
repsstewart@gmail.com

**90th District Rep. Tom Demmer**
1221 Currency Street, Suite B, Rochelle, IL 61068
rep@tomdemmer.com