

# KANE COUNTY AUDUBON

## 2007 WINTER NEWSLETTER

### FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL BIRDFEEDER

Winter has not yet descended upon us even though our first big snowfall has hit. As of today, the snow has melted and the week forecast is for still mild weather. But we all know this too shall end and we will be in the grips of Old Man Winter before too long. I'm excited about this upcoming year, for KCA has a very good schedule of walks and meetings: On January 1<sup>st</sup> we have our first walk of the year getting members started on their 2007 year list (if you haven't done one in past years, try this year). In January we team up with the Kane County Forest Preserve District and the St. Charles Park District to have Jeff Brawn come and talk about restoration – we have all seen such activities around Kane County, and perhaps Jeff will explain the positive effects of these efforts – please note that this meeting will be at the St. Charles Pottawatomie Community Center. Trips will take us to the Fox River looking for winter waterfowl, and on to Starved Rock and the annual Illinois Audubon Society Eagle Days. Check the newsletter for the full listing of activities that have been planned. We have been very pleased with the raffles that are held at our monthly meetings. The proceeds from our monthly raffles go to IAS to help in its campaign for the new headquarters in Springfield. I hope that you have made a pledge on your own for this very important venture, if not, please consider it.

The website continues to be a great way to keep members informed about sightings and other activities that KCA is involved in. If you would like to be put on a birders alert email list, let me know.

As always, all of our activities are open to members and nonmembers alike, so take the time to come and join us.

### 2006 TRIP COUNT NUMBERS

Last year, with incomplete records, we recorded 125 birds for our trips. This year with the introduction of weekly rambles along with our scheduled trips we have seen an amazing 190 species. Some of exciting sightings were the Ruffed Grouse, Great Black-backed Gull, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The lists were collected and tabulated – we missed only a few of the lists. The weekly rambles started in June and I think only two weeks had no such activities. The number of participants on the scheduled trips was always a pleasant surprise, and the number who went on the rambles was fairly consistent (usually the retired members being those in attendance). Many of those who were new gradually become familiar as they continued to show up on trips. Next year we will try to keep better records and try to beat this year's count. It should be noted that the Spring Bird Count and the Christmas Bird count were not included in the data.

### KANE COUNTY AUDUBON LIBRARY Submitted by Jane McMillan

Our library is growing slowly. We have 9 field guides, 4 tapes and 26 books which include books for beginning birders, personal stories, humorous stories and various bird identification books. The Big Year by Mark Obmascik and Birding Illinois by Sheryl Devore are a few of the favorites. With the donations from the use of our library, field guides will be purchased since they are the most requested items.

## **INK CARTRIDGE RECYCLING PROGRAM** Submitted by Cheryl Hayes

We just received our second check of the year. This one is for \$53. That brings our total for the past year to \$78. Great work everyone! Please continue to bring those ink cartridges to our meetings or you can take an envelope (postage paid) and mail your own from home - we will still get the credit. Just a reminder, no Epson or Canon BCI cartridges will be accepted.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

Welcome to the following new members to KCA: John and Carolyn Baker of St. Charles, Gloria Dimoplou of Elgin, and Judith Graber & Paul Kuehnert of Batavia.

## **40<sup>TH</sup> YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

On November 2, 1966 the first meeting of the Kane County Audubon Society took place. On our December meeting, we celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with cake that had a cardinal on it. We can all be proud of our involvement in Kane County and the active chapter that we have. It was stated by the past executive secretary of IAS, Marilyn Campbell, that KCA was one of the fastest growing chapters in the society. We must be doing something right so if you haven't been involved, please come and join our excitement. Check out the history of KCA on our website ([www.kanecountyaudubon.org](http://www.kanecountyaudubon.org)).

## **KCA BOARD MEMBERS**

We welcome Ann Holt-Harris as our newest board member. She is now the program chairperson. If you have any suggestions for presenters or topics for our monthly meetings, please let her know.

## **HISTORICAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATA** Submitted by Bob Andrini

In this newsletter you will find the results of this year's Christmas Bird Count data. It's nice to look over it, but here is the next step if you want further study. Go to the website [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc) and you can look at the "Historical Results" tool – this will enable you to look at the history of any bird you choose. It is surprising to see that since 1970 the House Sparrow has been declining in numbers. The decline can also be seen for European Starlings (1961 to date). So pick a bird, any bird, and look to see how their numbers have been doing – its an education in itself to be able to go to the data and try to make an "educated guess" about that species.

## **SAD NEWS** Submitted by Jerry Hope

On October 13, 2006, Kane County Audubon lost a good friend and fellow birder. John Tilton died after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

I first knew John as a teacher, outdoors person, and gardener, and then later, as a fellow birder after I joined KCA. John loved to go on long walks to observe birds and nature. He even knew where to find owls at night.

John was past president of KCA. He helped hold together our chapter during the 80's when membership was at a low point.

John hated to miss the Spring Bird Count and walks as his disease progressed. All who knew John will miss him. We wish the best for his family.

## MEETING PRESENTATIONS (a preview of programs at upcoming meetings)

**January 10** – Jeff Brawn from the University of Illinois will be giving a talk on the effects of savanna restoration (fire, cutting, etc) on bird populations and communities. Jeff has studied about a dozen restoration and control sites and can give first hand analysis of the results. The studies have important implications for the conservation of birds associated with disturbance/mediated habitats. **The January meeting will take place at the St. Charles Pottawatomie Community Center.**

**February 14** – Dan Thompson from DuPage Forest Preserve District will talk about the reintroduction of Barn Owls to our area. He will talk about the ecology of the Barn Owl and some of the pressures that can impact the birds. He will also discuss how they raise the young that will be released.

**March 14** – Members of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will give a talk on migratory birds and the organization's work to protect stopover sites. TNC and partners are working to identify, protect and restore sites in the greater Chicago area.

**April 11 - What's in a Name?** - Most birders know Swainson's Thrush, few have seen the elusive Swainson's Warbler, but who was Swainson? Wilson sure got around – Wilson's Warbler, Wilson's Plover, Wilson's Storm Petrel and a warbler genus *Wilsonia* – but who was Wilson? Wayne Svoboda, IAS board member and also a member of Fort Dearborn chapter of IAS, will explore the origin of common and scientific names of selected bird species.

**May 9 – A Walk Around Nelson Lake** - Join Kathy and Bob Andrini on a presentation of a spring walk around our beloved Nelson's Lake. You will experience both sights and sounds of wildlife that one would expect to find on a walk around what Chicago Wilderness describes as the "Jewel of the Fox River Valley."

## ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT Submitted by Rhonda Nelson, Treasurer

Here is a current report concerning the finances of Kane County Audubon:

Beginning Balance November 1, 2005	\$1,676.42
Income	\$1,588.72
Expenses	\$1,728.40
Ending Balance October 31, 2006	\$1,536.40

It should be noted that many of our expenses go to different organizations:

- Junior Bird Feeder Challenge (for bird feeder and food to local grade schools)
- The annual Gull Frolic held at Winthrop Harbor
- The Bird Conservation Network

A big portion of our expenses go toward the duplication and distribution of newsletters and also for the fees for speakers.

Along with our initial donation and the monthly raffles, we have sent \$715 to Illinois Audubon Society for the construction of the headquarters at the Adams house.

## **FIELD TRIP REPORTS**

### **September 16 - Lippold Forest Preserve (Jon Duerr)**

The bird activity was great and all were able to get views of most species. Cape May Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos stopped in the open for all to see. 2 to 3 adult male American Redstarts and many immature Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, along with Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were also seen. 45 species were seen on the day.

### **September 29 - Crex Meadows (Nancy Schnaitman)**

Friday morning, nine dedicated birders headed for northern Wisconsin for a fruitful weekend of fall birding. Unhindered by the cool, cloudy weather and occasional raindrops, the KCA group, was joined Friday in Grantsburg by 4 more birders. We managed to see 67 of the 270 different kinds of birds reported on the 30,000 acres that is the incredible Crex Meadows.

Highlights of the trip include: Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Pied-billed Grebe, Trumpeter Swan, Swamp Sparrow, Tennessee Warbler, Horned Lark, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ring-necked Duck, Black-bellied Plover, Blue-winged Teal, Rusty Blackbird, Palm Warbler, Wood Duck, Red-headed Woodpecker, American Coot, Solitary Sandpiper, Gadwall, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, and many, many Sandhill Cranes.

In addition to the aforementioned, the really HIGH highlights included the 2 American Bitterns that hid effectively in the tall grass swamp and then took flight for all of us to see; a Harris's Sparrow in a bush; the Merlin resting in the sand beside a lake; many Northern Harriers on the wing swooping to and fro; Yellow-rumped Warblers displaying unusual behavior. We were also treated to a flock of Snow Geese displaying both the blue morph and white plumage. A Ruffed Grouse gifted us with his presence near the sidewalk outside the visitor center – THIS WAS A LIFER FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS. The most memorable sighting for this birder were 2 Wilson's Snipe feeding in the mud opposite Phantom Lake. What wonderful creatures all!

We all headed home (by way of Bloomers, WI and the homemade pies) with wonderful memories of our time at Crex Meadows.

### **October 14 - Hampshire Forest Preserve (Bob Andrini)**

Stocking caps, gloves, hoods and warm coats were the order of the day as 10 KCA members met at Hampshire FP to walk the woods, fields, and trails. The temperature in the woods caused one to shiver as we walked the quiet surroundings. Only a few woodpeckers, deer and migrating American Robins were observed as we walked on the path through the woods. Once in the open with the sun bathing us in warmth did the activity of the forest fliers increase in activity. Darting Kinglets (both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned) were in constant motion as they pursued a morning breakfast. Warblers were still in evidence as Yellow-rumps and Palms were in constant motion in the sun drenched thickets. Three American Bluebirds were sighted in an opening while they chased bugs on the ground. Surprising to us were the Fox, Song, and Field Sparrow that were still around. In the air, Red-tail Hawks, a skein of Canada Geese kept our eyes not only in the trees and on the ground, but also on the sky. We noticed that our steps increased as we left the sunny meadow and entered the shade covered, wind blown western portion of the preserve. We also witnessed a Common Yellowthroat feeding a very large Brown-headed Cowbird. 34 species were seen on the walk.

### **November 18 – Crabtree Forest Preserve (Jane McMillan)**

With the sky blue, the temperature mild and no wind – how could birding be bad. We spent time in the parking lot observing several species of woodpeckers – a good omen for our outing. We then moved past the ranger station to be greeted by a small flock of Eastern Bluebirds. The sun shining on their feathers made them glow as if filled with neon. At the observation deck we saw Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, Ruddy Duck, a Great Blue Heron and a few Cackling Geese. We continued around the park seeing a few sparrows and ending the trip with Gadwall ducks.

## WINTER ACTIVITIES (a calendar of upcoming KCA events)

Following are the dates, times and places for our upcoming activities. If there are any questions, please contact the trip leader or Bob Andrini. Make sure that you dress properly for the weather. **Meetings start at 7 PM at Peck Farm (except for the meeting of January 10).** All activities are open to the public.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Leader/Contact</b>	
<b>January</b>	1	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	6	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	10	Meeting: Jeff Brawn – Savanna Restoration	<b>Pottawatomie Community Center, 8 North Ave. St. Charles</b>	7 PM	Bob 630-584-8386
	20	Birdwalk	SEBA Park, South Elgin	8 AM	Bob 630-584-8386
	27	Field Trip: Bald Eagle Weekend	Starved Rock State Park, near LaSalle-Peru	8 AM	Jane 847-622-3216 (call if interested)
<b>February</b>	3	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	10	Field Trip: Gull Frolic	Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club, Winthrop Harbor	8 AM	Bob 630-584-8386 (call if interested)
	14	Meeting: Dan Thompson - Reintroduction of Barn Owls	Peck Farm Park, Geneva	7 PM	Bob 630-584-8386
	17	Car Birding	Country Roads (meet at Peck Farm Park, Geneva)	8 AM	Bob 630-584-8386
<b>March</b>	3	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	14	Meeting: The Nature Conservancy - Bird Conservation	Peck Farm Park, Geneva	7 PM	Bob 630-584-8386
	24	Field Trip	Shabbona State Park, Shabbona	8 AM	Chris 630-377-0773
	28	Woodcock Walk	TBA	Sunset	Bob 630-584-8386

<b>April</b>	7	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	11	Meeting: Wayne Svaboda - What's in a Name?	Peck Farm Park, Geneva	7 PM	Bob 630-584-8386
	21	Birdwalk	Big Rock Forest Preserve, Big Rock	8 AM	Scott 630-377-3814
	28	Birdwalk	Lippold Park, Batavia	8 AM	Jack 630-587-1237
<b>May</b>	5	Spring Bird Count	All around Kane County	All day	Jon 630-584-5891
	9	Meeting: Kathy & Bob Andrini - A Walk Around Nelson Lake	Peck Farm Park, Geneva	7 PM	Bob 630-584-8386
	12	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384
	19	Birdwalk	Grunwald Farm Forest Preserve, Blackberry Township	8 AM	Jon 630-584-5891
	26	Field Trip	Lowden-Miller State Forest, Oregon	7:30 AM	Chris 630-377-0773
<b>June</b>	2	Birdwalk	Nelson Lake, Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia	8 AM	Rhonda 630-479-1384

**PLEASE PATRONIZE THESE BUSINESSES**

Here are three stores that offer Kane County Audubon members 10% off on bird related items. When you go into the stores, present these coupons for your savings and **please thank them for their participation.**

<p><b>JOHNSON’S FARM &amp; COUNTRY STORE</b> 40W467 Rt. 38 Elburn, IL 630-232-9004</p> <p><b>KANE COUNTY AUDUBON</b> <i>Use before December 2007</i></p>	<p><b>BLACKBERRY STATION</b> 202 W. North St. Elburn, IL 630-365-1424</p> <p><b>KANE COUNTY AUDUBON</b> <i>Use before December 2007</i></p>	<p><b>REGOLE’S HARVEST SHOPPE</b> 2N492 Kirk Rd. St. Charles, IL 630-584-2024</p> <p><b>KANE COUNTY AUDUBON</b> <i>Use before December 2007</i></p>
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**DECEMBER 16, 2006 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** Submitted by Party Leader Jon Duerr

**Kane County Audubon/Section 8 Fermi Christmas Count**

Compared to last year, the weather was balmy. The temperature was 28-40 degrees and a breeze from the south-southeast kept the air stirred. Nine groups took to area 8 of the Fermi Circle while three people watched feeders. There was open water – Nelson Lake had a few open holes, the creeks were all flowing and some of the detention ponds had some open water on the edges.

The results were mediocre, which was also seen in the other areas of the Fermi Circle. We had 43 species as compared to 51 species seen in 2005. The complete circle had 74 species. However, the Circle had 6 high count records: 15 Hooded Mergansers; 39 Grt. Blue Herons; 29 Belted Kingfishers; 61 Hairy Woodpeckers; 155 White-breasted Nuthatches; and 10,585 E. Starlings.

One historic new species, a Greater Black-backed Gull was added to the Fermi list as it was found at Settler’s Hill landfill. The disappointments were among the field birds – no Pheasants, Longspurs, or Snow Buntings were counted.

Area 8 (Kane County Audubon) did not have a unique species for the circle but we contributed over half of the Mourning Doves and Fox Sparrows and about a quarter of the Canada Geese, Mallards, Blue Herons, Red-tailed Hawks, Kestrels, Crows, Tree Sparrows, Song Sparrows and House Finches.

Every year is different which makes the combined effort an exciting experience. We may have only seen 43 species in area 8, but they were special in every way.

<b>Bird Species</b>	<b>Kane Area 8</b>	<b>Total Fermi</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>	<b>Kane Area 8</b>	<b>Total Fermi</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>	<b>Kane Area 8</b>	<b>Total Fermi</b>
Lesser Snow Goose		3	Ring-billed Gull	25	498	Hermit Thrush	2	5
Canada Goose	4,335	15,600	Herring Gull	13	599	Am. Robin	22	1,381
Cackling Goose	8	83	Mourning Dove	81	356	E. Starling	826	10,585
Mute Swan		2	E. Screech Owl		20	Cedar Waxwing	1	568
Wood Duck		3	Grt. Horned Owl	2	18	Yell-rmp Wblr		9
Gadwall		12	Long Eared Owl		5	Am. Tree Sprw	243	714
Am. Wigeon		1	Short eared Owl		1	Fox Sparrow	6	11
Am. Black Duck	6	34	Belted Kingfisher	1	29	Song Sparrow	11	45
Mallard	708	2,101	Red-bellied Wpkr	23	127	Swamp Sparrow		11
No. Shoveler		11	Downy Wpkr	37	225	Wh-throat Sprw	5	116
Northern Pintail		2	Hairy Wpkr	7	81	Wh-crned Sprw	3	5
Lesser Scaup		1	No. Flicker	1	30	Drk-eyed Junco	268	1,291
Common Goldeneye		61	No. Shrike	1	3	No. Cardinal	108	616
Hooded Merganser		15	Blue Jay	6	29	Red-wng Blkbrd		15
Common Merganser		19	Am. Crow	40	118	Rusty Blkbrd	1	3
Pied-billed Grebe		9	Horned Lark		63	C. Grackle		1
Grt. Blue Heron	9	39	Bl-capped Chickdee	92	539	House Finch	141	357
No. Harrier	1	9	Tufted Titmouse	2	4	Am. Goldfinch	174	726
Sharp Sh. Hawk		4	Red-brst Nuthatch	4	18	House Sprw	137	796
Coopers Hawk	3	24	Wht-brst Nuthatch	29	155	Thayers Gull		1
Red-Tail Hawk	27	100	Br. Creeper	1	58	Bufflehead		1
Rough-leg Hawk		1	Carolina Wren	1	6	Les-Blk Back G.		1
Am. Kestrel	9	25	Winter Wren		3	Grt-blk Back G.		1
Am. Coot		6	Gld-crned Kinglet		26			
Wilson Snipe		4	Eastern Bluebird		27			

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO BECOME A BETTER BIRDER

I've commented before on what a wonderfully simple and inexpensive activity birding can be. The only essential tools are binoculars and a field guide. That's still as true as ever. But in this column I'll highlight some additional resources that can elevate your birding skills and, hopefully, your enjoyment of the hobby.

Let's start with two books: "Sibley's Birding Basics" and "Pete Dunne on Bird Watching: The How-to, Where-to and When-to of Birding." These recently published paperbacks are loaded with good advice for beginners and beyond. Make a point to read at least one of them. A third book, "The Complete Birder" by Jack Connor, is also well worth a look, especially if you've been at this for a while.

"All About Birds" is a terrific online reference offered free by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Imagine your field guide with sound. More than 600 species are highlighted. Go to [www.birds.cornell.edu/allaboutbirds/birdguide](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/allaboutbirds/birdguide).

If you have an e-mail account, consider signing up for IBET, a statewide list-serve where birders report their sightings and share other useful information. The network provides opportunities to see more birds, including rarities like the Pileated Woodpecker that visited DuPage County in June. But just reading the incoming messages is valuable—you'll learn what birds to expect at different times throughout the year, and the best places to go see them. To sign on, send a blank e-mail to [ILbirds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ILbirds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com), wait for the response, then follow the instructions.

If you're not a computer user, try calling the DuPage Birding Club hotline at (630) 406-8111. You'll hear a recorded message about what's being seen and where. This is the low-tech alternative to IBET so sighting information is updated less frequently.

Subscribe to *Bird Watcher's Digest* or *Birder's World*. These magazines, each published six times a year, will educate and inspire you. The photos alone are worth the price.

Bird identification becomes a lot easier—and satisfying—when you know the songs and call notes. Think about acquiring some CDs. The narrated "Birding by Ear" series from Peterson is excellent. For just the bird sounds without the commentary, try "Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs: Eastern Region." Finally, if you're new to birding, the Peterson "Backyard Bird Song" CD is a good starting point. It features 28 common birds.

*"Words on Birds" is a monthly newspaper column by Jeff Reiter. The above column appeared in September and is reprinted here with his permission.*