

# WINTER 2012 NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL BIRD FEEDER

As I write this column, we have yet to have any accumulation of snow I'm sure that will change! The fall was very good for birding and the weather made it an enjoyable season. The fall migrants either flew directly over our area, were very sporadic in passing through, or just enjoyed the weather up north and decided to leave later than usual. The trip to Jasper-Pulaski at the end of Oct. had only 3,000 cranes while early in Dec. they were still passing overhead in large flocks.

If you look at the KCA calendar in the newsletter, you will see a full slate of activities. Our trip leaders welcome members and nonmembers alike to these excursions. Its always fun to start the year off with the annual New Years Day Walk – it's a good way to start your year list (with friends and new birds). On Jan. 28 we will travel to Starved Rock and then on Feb. 19 to the annual Gull Frolic – these are great outings to see not only unusual birds, but also meet other birders who share a kindred spirit. Please note that some trips will require contact with the trip leaders for necessary information. Also note that one trip (April 29) is on a SUNDAY and the trip to Chicago on May 19th leaves at 7 AM. Our annual Scope Day will take place in April – bring a friend. Good luck to those KCA members who are heading to Arizona for a 'distant' trip. This trip as well as the trip to Emiquon is a continuation of traveling trips to other good birding areas. Each year the number of trips and number of species seen has been increasing, hopefully 2012 will continue in that manner.

Our meetings will have exciting presentations about a wide range of topics: birding Oaxaca; butterflies, hummingbirds and how to take great photos. Each meeting will also have the monthly raffle where an item will go to the person who has the winning ticket. The raffles have been a welcome addition to our treasury. Also at the meetings will be the socialization and discussion that KCA is known for.

As spring draws near we will be waiting for the disappearance of the Dark-eyed Junco's, for when they disappear, the spring migrants start showing up.

Come and join KCA in any (or all) activities – bring a friend to introduce them to the world of nature that invites and welcomes us to experience it.

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## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2011 - TERRY MURRAY

This year we participated in the 112th annual Christmas Bird Count, and this was the 36th year for the Fermi Circle portion of it. The 15 mile diameter circle, which is centered on the Dupage / Kane county border within Fermi Laboratory, is divided into eight sections between Dupage birding Club and Kane County Audubon. Kane County Audubon counts all of section 8, which is the largest individual section and covers most of the area west of the Fox River within the circle. We had 30 people divided into 8 teams covering our section, putting in a total of over 40 individual party hours looking for birds. We also had a couple of people count birds at their backyard bird feeders.

Some of the good birds were 6 Sandhill Cranes that finally made an appearance this year. A Short-Eared Owl and a couple of Great Horned Owls rewarded those who set out before dawn. Lots of Brown Creepers were actively hunting for bugs and spiders on tree trunks along the Fox River. The Bald Eagles were just out of our range this year, but, we did manage to get a couple of yet to be recorded birds for our section. One of them was a Peregrine Falcon in downtown Aurora, which has been feeding on the ample Rock Pigeon supply there. And also, we found a lost Catbird to add to the birds that needed to be documented this year.

All in all, we had very favorable weather, with temperatures hovering around freezing and a light layer of fresh falling snow to cushion our footsteps, which made for excellent conditions to listen for the birds in hiding. With the warmer than normal temperatures, many of the lakes and ponds were not frozen over, so 58 individual species were recorded this year for our

section alone, which is quite impressive. Everyone that helped deserves a big THANK YOU.

Birds	#	Bird	#	Bird	#
Canada Goose	4108	Cackling Goose	12	Wood Duck	1
Mallard	746	Hooded Merganser	1	Common Merganser	20
Ring-necked Ph.	4	Great Blue Heron	5	Northern Harrier	6
Cooper's Hawk	6	Red-tailed Hawk	33	Peregrine Falcon	1
Am. Kestrel	2	Am. Coot	2	Sandhill Crane	6
Wilson's Snipe	6	Ring-billed Gull	38	Herring Gull	9
Rock Pigeon	143	Mourning Dove	192	Great Horned Owl	2
Short-eared Owl	1	Belted Kingfisher	3	Red-bellied Wdpkr	39
Yellow-bell Sapskr	7	Downy Woodpecker	49	Hairy Woodpecker	4
Northern Shrike	2	Blue Jay	27	American Crow	72
Horned Lark	54	Black-cap Chickadee	239	Tufted Titmouse	3
Red-brstd Nuthatch	1	White-brstd Nuthatch	41	Brown Creeper	26
Golden-crn Kinglet	2	Eastern Bluebird	2	Hermit Thrush	1
American Robin	16	Gray Catbird	1	European Starling	1819
Cedar Waxwing	7	Eastern Towhee	1	Am. Tree Sparrow	514
Savannah Sparrow	19	Song Sparrow	8	Swamp Sparrow	14
White-th. Sparrow	2	White-crn Sparrow	24	Dark-eyed Junco	319
Snow Bunting	4	Northern Cardinal	161	Red-wing Blackbird	267
House Finch	163	Pine Siskin	22	American Goldfinch	110
House Sparrow	198				

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## FROM THE FIELD

### Oct. 22 – Johnson’s Mound Forest Preserve - Nancy Schnaitman

Temperature at 8 AM was in the mid 30’s; warming to mid 60’s by noon. with little wind. Birding was very good at Johnson’s Mound with a great deal of activity between 8 AM and 9:30 AM along the brushy edges, with the dominate species being White-throated Sparrows feeding along those edges. Woodland, open fields and edges were covered by the 20 participants and a total of 34 species were observed.

### Oct. 29 – Jasper-Pulaski trip - Jon Duerr

Eight KCA members drove to Indiana with high hopes of finding rare and unique birds. The first stop was the famous birding hot spot Miller Beach to scan Lake Michigan. Arriving at approximately 9:30 we found a glorious sunny lakeshore with a gentle southwestern breeze. Beautiful yes, but not the kind of turbulent weather needed to drive the lake birds to the shore! We did find a flock of Bonaparte Gulls that floated over us and a number of strings of Greater Scaup flying over the lake swells. Two native Swans flew past us but we could not determine their species. A flock of 7 Horned Grebes were finally seen offshore after scanning the lake for many minutes. We drove on to Michigan City to continue lake viewing. There we added a Red-shouldered Hawk circling the harbor side park. We arrived at Jasper-Pulaski Wildlife Area mid-afternoon to find 2-3,000 Sandhill Cranes on the meadow in front of the observation platform. They exhibited a lot of comings and goings as well as announcing their presence with their unique calls. By that time the skies had clouded over and the group decided there was no need to stay for the evening flight so we headed home around 4:30. While walking

around J-P we did see Pine Siskins, E. Towhees, White-crowned and throated Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Hairy Woodpecker. A flock of 5 E. Bluebirds put on a nice show around the platform. We did not find the rare bird species we hoped for but we did see a couple of the unique birding hot spots of the Chicago region.

### **Nov. 19 – SEBA Park - Jane McMillan**

Birders have a priority list...birding 1st then preparing for the Thanksgiving Holiday feast...if one of those rare birds doesn't decide to show up. Isn't that why we have frozen TV dinners???? Our group was rewarded with a wonderful, extended view of a Carolina Wren singing like it was spring...or maybe just scolding us. We also had long views of an adult Bald Eagle. As usual we caught up with each other's lives and plans for the up-coming holiday. A total of 19 species were observed on the trip. All in all a great outing.

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## **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT - 2012**

This year from February 17 to February 20 the annual GBBC will once again take place. Last year over 92,000 checklists were turned in throughout North America. Residents of Kane County turned in fewer checklists than the previous year (117 compared to 228). A total of 10,821 birds were reported as compared to more than 20,000 the year before. St. Charles led with checklists in 2011 and Batavia had the highest number of species seen with 43. To view the results of last year, or to just learn more about the count and its importance, go to the our website [www.kanecountyaudubon.org](http://www.kanecountyaudubon.org) or to [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). With a new GBBC coming in Feb. let's see if we can increase our numbers once again. Invite friends over and teach them how to identify and count birds coming to your feeders. Call others and go to a local birding site and then go for coffee and discuss the results (as well as turn the results in). This year, on Sunday Feb. 19th from 12 PM until 4 PM, KCA members will be out at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center to participate in the count. If you're available on that Sunday, stop by to help. If you have problems with sending your data in, or don't have a computer, let me know and I (or someone) will help you out.

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## **KCA PHOTO EXHIBIT**

For the time being, the KCA Photo Exhibit has been disassembled and the photos have been returned to their rightful owners. For over 1 ½ year, the exhibit has traveled throughout Kane County to libraries, churches and nature centers. Many positive comments were reported about the outstanding images and the write-ups that accompanied each photo. The photographers who participated were: Bob and Kathy Andrini; John Baker; Mark Bowman; John Janunas; Norm Kopp; Paul Mayer; Rich and Marion Miller; Chuck Peterson; Ken Schneider; John Sprovieri; Sue Wagoner; and Dennis Walz. Thanks to all the photographers for allowing KCA to exhibit their beautiful work and to Kath for the great write-ups.

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## **FROM NATURE'S NOTEBOOK**

**Burned** by Theresa LeCompte

As I pulled into the Wal-Mart parking lot, I noticed a gray column of smoke rising about four miles to the north. I watched as the smoke thickened, then ominously darkened. The air even smelled slightly scorched. Oh, I knew what was burning, so I quickened my pace. I needed to make haste with my errands if I were to arrive at the fire's source in time to witness the hungry flames. You see, I know that these were the cleansing flames of a prescribed burn at Nelson' Lake. I was lucky enough to see the burn last year and found it to be a completely mesmerizing event. This year, I felt an uncontrollable urge to see it again.

I arrived too late. Most of the fire had already burned through the marshy shore surrounding the lake. Cattails had been torched, only charred stalks still stood. The blackened grasses crumbled to ash beneath my feet. A few hotspots flared, the small flames crackling and popping. Old, fallen timbers that had lain within the marsh now smoked like lit, forgotten cigars

in a massive ashtray. The wind whisked up whirls of the ash, sending tiny black tornadoes racing across the scorched landscape. These quickly collapsed, the surge of energy exhausted. What a barren and desolate place Nelson's Lake now appeared to be.

Yet, a Great Blue Heron waded in the shallows, intently stalking some unsuspecting prey. And other onlookers at the lake described the departure of a huge squadron of pelicans just moments before my arrival. It was said that the pelicans lifted off the lake, circled upwards in a great spiral, higher and higher, until they became tiny specks that were swallowed by the sky. A few of the white birds still lingered on the middle of the lake. Compelled by the need to check on the welfare of the resident owls, I followed the trail to the northwest side of the lake. Perched (unharmd) on a large limb overhanging the burnt path, a Great Horned Owl calmly surveyed its changed environment.

Just five days later, the area surrounding the lake was no longer black from the burn. Green shoots had already pushed their way through by two inches. A death and resurrection had occurred all within a week. Coincidentally, this week also happened to be Holy Week this year. I can't help but think that there is some spiritual significance here.....

### **Cat and Crows by Joyce**

I have a story of an encounter between a cat and two crows. Recently I heard a crow cawing and looked out my window. I happened to be holding my 2 yr old granddaughter and said to her, "look at the crows". I teach her the names of every bird we see. Up in a tree in the backyard next door to me were two crows "talking" to a cat who had climbed up the tree. The cat was "talking" back to the birds and continued climbing through the branches. He reached halfway up the tree and looked like he was trying to get to them. Of course they flew higher and higher in the tree. That's when I opened my window and yelled out! "Get down from there! You can't get them and you might get hurt!" The cat stopped, looked at me, stared for a few seconds, and then climbed back down the tree as the crows flew away.

I rescued a cat that day and wondered what would have happened if I hadn't heard the crows.

### **Green Heron by Katie Richardson**

Dave and I were canoeing and fishing in South Mississippi several years ago. We had anchored 3 – 10 feet from the bank, to get close to 'shady places' where bream were hiding. We soon noticed a Green Heron in a low bush jutting out from the bank, also fishing. We paddled in closer, and very surprisingly, he was indifferent to our presence. We saw that he was plucking off leaves from the bush, dropping into the water below, and waiting for minnows to swim up to the surface of the water. When it rippled, he would pounce for them. We paddled in closer and closer and he continued to be indifferent to us. This went on for probably close to an hour. It was fascinating to see cause and effect strategy for feeding. I have never gotten before or since, such a long, good look at a Green Heron.

### **Strange Calls by Bob Andrini**

One day while doing my monthly count at Norris Woods, I heard a 'different' bird call coming from behind me on the path I was walking. I listened for a moment not recognizing the call (I know many bird calls). I continued waiting and then decided to head back to try to identify the birds giving the call. The sound continued as I walked until I came over a slight rise and saw three American Robins vocalizing a call I hadn't heard before. Then I noticed the source of the strange call – right below the Robins was a Coyote walking on the trail in my direction. I think the Robins were 'saying' "there's a ##### Coyote in the woods".. Birds have many different calls and use them for different purposes – I just witnessed one I hadn't heard before.

### **'Old' Sayings**

“Old Birders never die, they just FINISH their life lists”

“Old Digiscopers never die, they just lose their focus”

## MOOSEHEART EAGLES RELEASED

On 12 November KCA Board member Tim Balassie joined IDNR Director Marc Miller, Don Goerne of Starved Rock Audubon, and members of the press to witness the release of the two juvenile bald eagles recovered from Mooseheart earlier this year. Marc, Tim and Don took a boat to Plum Island to view the release close at hand. Dawn Keller of Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation came to the island in another boat. The eagles' release occurred around noon on Plum Island, a IAS-owned island, in the Illinois River below Starved Rock. Dawn freed the eagles one at a time, while a crowd estimated at seven hundred gathered onshore. Several other KCA members made the trip to Starved Rock and enjoyed an educational program about birds of prey.

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## NEW MEMBERS

The following are new members for the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2011.

<b>Aurora:</b>	Andrew Aldritch Adele Buss Yeanette Johnson
<b>Batavia:</b>	Maureen Huey
<b>Geneva:</b>	Lark Schuetz
<b>Gilberts:</b>	Janet Underwood
<b>Dundee:</b>	June & Steve Keibler
<b>Elgin:</b>	Gilbert & Mary Nore Nancy Lamia Gene & Lois Heine
<b>Montgomery:</b>	Elizabeth Copeland
<b>North Aurora:</b>	Don & Liz Grozis Stephen & Margertet Myers
<b>Prairie Grove:</b>	Tami Zuck
<b>St. Charles:</b>	Jeff & Francene Andresen Joan Leonard Katie Richardson Mary & Cliff Tebeau Debra Norton Dana Szczepanik
<b>Sugar Grove:</b>	Linda Ryba

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## SHRIKE WALK - JANUARY 14

In conjunction with the St. Charles Park District, KCA will offer a Shrike Walk at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center. It will begin at 8 AM in the Discovery Center with Shrike information and then proceed outside to look for the birds. The event is free, but registration is required – call 630-513-4399. The class number is 17326. Please dress properly for this winter outing.

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## BIRD TRIPS/WALKS/RAMBLES

This has been a record breaking year as far as KCA trips are concerned. We not only had more trips (94) but have also seen more species than in past years. I have data since 2005 when we counted for part of the year, but since that date we have records for the full year.

Year	# trips	#species
2005	na	125
2006	35	192
2007	56	201
2008	63	209
2009	88	225
2010	75	232
2011	94	232

In 2011 several exciting new birds were seen for the first time by many of the participants: Snowy Owl, Pileated Woodpecker; Black-legged Kittiwake; Cinnamon Teal, American Avocets. The 90+ walks are both the scheduled Sat. walks and the spontaneous rambles. Rambles take place when a special bird appears in the area, or just for an extra outing. If you want to be notified of the rambles, you must give Bob Andrini your email address and you will be added to the KCAbirdalert mail list. If you don't have a computer, give Bob a call to find out about rambles.

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## KCA PROGRAMS FOR 2012

**January:** If you always wanted to take pictures of birds in flight, come and hear John Janunas give his tips and tricks for beginning bird photographers. Exciting photos of birds in flight will be presented.

**February:** Doug Taron, the curator of Biology and Vice President of research and conservation at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago will present a photographic exploration of butterflies of the greater Chicago area. Doug is responsible for the large butterfly exhibit at the Notebaert Nature Museum.

**March:** Denis Kania will present a program on amazing hummingbirds. Human beings marvel at the ease of flight exhibited by birds. Hummingbirds, in particular, seem to break all the rules. These acrobats of the air can literally fly upside down and backwards. They have adapted to freezing temperatures, alternate migration patterns, and plant evolution. We will explore hummingbird's anatomical features that allow their unconventional flight, their role as pollinators, and their fascinating relationships with plants. Taking both global and local views, we will try to understand why hummingbirds not previously recorded in Illinois are beginning to appear in our backyards.

**April:** Jon Duerr who knows Kane County Forest Preserves 'up close and personal' will present a program on the development of land formations in Kane County. Kane County has a wide variety of habitats as well as a being a nice place to live. How did this happen? Also, why are birds and plants arranged as they are in the county? The glacial history of the Mid-west holds the key. A great deal of new data has come to light in recent years about the past. This talk attempts to summarize the new findings and explain our natural history.

**May:** Jack Pomatto will present another travel program about birding Oxaca Mexico. This program covers the bird life, archeology and culture of this beautiful and tremendously varied Mexican state. We will traverse the mountains going from the arid west to the lush east. Our archaeological coverage will focus on the iconic world heritage site Monte Alban. Then we travel to Mittla which became a Mixtec center later in history. The handsome colonial capital, Oaxaca City is a cultural treasure that we will focus on. The local village handicrafts will be examined as well.

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## WINTER/SPRING ACTIVITIES

Following are the dates/times/locations for the upcoming activities. All meetings take place at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center. All trips will start at the locations listed. KCA activities are open to the public. Maps to all locations are available on our website ([www.kanecountyaudubon.org](http://www.kanecountyaudubon.org)). If you have any questions, please contact the trip leader.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Contact/Leader</b>
<b>Jan</b>	1 Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM	Rhonda 630.479.1384
	7 Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM	Terry 630.896.3219
	11 Meeting	"Photographing Birds in Flight," John Janunas, speaker @ Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	7 PM	Bob 630.584.8386
	14 Shrike Walk	Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	8 AM	Registration Required @ 630.513.4399
	21 Winter Car Birding	Depart Peck Farm Park	8 AM	Tim 630.513.7345
	28 IAS Eagle Days	Starved Rock State Park		Tim 630.513.7345
<b>Feb</b>	4 Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM	Terry 630.896.3219
	8 Meeting	"Butterflies of Chicago," Doug Taron, speaker, @ Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	7 PM	Bob 630.584.8386
	11 Bird Walk	SEBA Park	8 AM	Jane 630.373.6704
	17 - 20 Great Backyard Bird Count	Taking place across North America		<a href="#">National Audubon website info</a>
	18 Gull Frolic	Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club		Tim 630.513.7345
	19 Great Backyard Bird Count	Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	12 - 4 PM	Bob 630.584.8386
	25 Chicago Lakefront birding	Depart Peck Farm Park	8 AM	Rich & Marion 630.450.2997
<b>Mar</b>	3 Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM	Terry 630.896.3219
	10 Bird Walk	Fox River Shores Forest Preserve	8 AM	Jon 630.584.5891
	14 Meeting	"Hummingbirds of the World," Denis Kania, speaker @ Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	7 PM	Bob 630.584.8386
	17 Bird Walk	Crabtree Forest Preserve	8 AM	Bob 630.584.8386
	24 Bird Walk	Oakhurst Forest Preserve	8 AM	Vern 312.543.4718
<b>Apr</b>	7 Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM	Terry 630.896.3219
	11 Meeting	"Post Glacial History of Kane County," Jon Duerr, speaker @ Hickory Knolls	7 PM	Bob 630.584.8386

		Discovery Center		
	14	Bird Walk	Freeman Kame Forest Preserve	8 AM Jon 630.584.5891
	20 -	IAS Spring		
	22	Meeting	Danville	Bob 630.584.8386
	29	Sunday! Bird Walk	Bliss Woods Forest Preserve	8 AM Nancy
<b>May</b>	5	Spring Bird Count	Throughout Kane County	All day Jon 630.584.5891
	6 -	Road Trip	Southeast Arizona Trip (reservation list is filled)	Paul 630.209.6019
	13		“Oxaca, Mexico: A Land of Many Treasures,”	
	9	Meeting	Jack Pomatto, speaker @ Hickory Knolls Discovery Center	7 PM Bob 630.584.8386
	12	Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM Terry 630.896.3219
	19	Road Trip	Chicago Lakefront, depart Peck Farm Park	7 AM Bob 630.584.8386
	26	Bird Walk	Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve	8 AM Bill 847.931.9123
<b>Jun</b>	2	Bird Walk	Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve	8 AM Terry 630.896.3219

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## Kane County Audubon A Chapter of Illinois Audubon

Chapter President - Bob Andrini, 630-584-8386  
 Vice President - Tim Balassie  
 Secretary - Nancy Schnaitman  
 Treasurer - Jane McMillan  
 Program Chair - Chuck Peterson  
 Field Trips - Jon Duerr  
 Hospitality - Carol and Erika Vidal and George Mohn  
 Historian - Jerry Hope  
 Website - Chris Madsen  
 Publicity - Sue Wagoner  
 Stamps - Julie Long  
 Ink Cartridges - Cheryl Hayes  
 IAS Representative - Bob Andrini and Jerry Hope  
 KCA website - [WWW.KANECOUNTYAUDUBON.ORG](http://WWW.KANECOUNTYAUDUBON.ORG)

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