

WINTER 2016

From the Presidential Bird Feeder

I spent some time looking over the past year's results for trips and rambles, and I came up with some interesting facts.

Through Dec. 2, KCA members have seen a total of 194 bird species during 59 walks, rambles and trips. When you add in the trip that KCA took to Alaska this year, we have 254 bird species for the year. Those distant trips sure add to our numbers, in addition to giving lifers to those members who go on the trips.

I asked Rhonda Nelson and Terry Murry to compile a list of birds seen during our monthly walks at Nelson Lake, which are always scheduled for the first Saturday of each month. Rhonda and Terry came up with 204 species since we started compiling data in 1993. If you figure 12 trips each year, that's approximately 288 trips. (Very few of our first-of-the-month trips did not take place, primarily due to very harsh weather.) Four of those 204 bird species were so rare in Kane County that they were not on KCA's established checklist: European Goldfinch, Brown Pelican, White-winged Scoter and Ruff. We thank Rhonda and Terry for their dedication to this KCA event.



American White Pelican is among the 204 species seen during KCA's monthly walks around Nelson Lake.

As for the total "life list" for KCA as an organization, we have seen an amazing 572 species of birds since I started keeping records around 2005. Since that year, KCA has organized 745 scheduled trips and rambles. Some of the birds on our life list come from our distant trips (Arizona, Texas, Alaska, California and Florida).

I would like to thank all those that have led walks, rambles and trips over the years. Kane County has many great birding spots, and we have done a good job of visiting them as well as organizing trips to nearby and distant states.

If you are not on the KCA Bird Alert e-mail list, please contact me. We use the list to announce rambles and other alerts. A ramble is a spontaneous trip that is usually announced the day before the trip takes place.

—Bob Andrini

Spring Fling Update

Well, it's finally here. KCA will be hosting the annual IAS Spring Fling May 19-21 at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center.

Friday night, we will start the weekend with our own Marion and Rich Miller presenting a program about their award-winning Chimney Swift tower project. They will discuss the effect, not only on the Chimney Swifts, but on people that have become interested in the birds.

Saturday will feature field trips to some great birding locations in the morning and afternoon. Saturday night, Dave Willard, retired collection manager from the Field Museum in Chicago, will talk about his 38 years at the Field Museum and many memorable events that have taken place over the years.

Sunday will start with morning field trips to local birding hot spots and finish with lunch and a compilation of all the field trips at Hickory Knolls. Raffle items, silent auction items, and a beautiful painting by Peggy McNamara, the artist-in-residence at the Field Museum, will be on display at the Discovery Center all weekend.

During our regular monthly meetings, we will have sign-up sheets for people to volunteer to help on the weekend. Please consider helping. We can use you! Many hands make for light work, so please volunteer.

Sometime this spring, you will receive a flier from the Illinois Audubon Society (if you are an IAS member), which will provide a form to register for the weekend, sign up for field trips, and select your meals. If you are not an IAS member, you can get the form from the IAS website (www.illinoisaudubon.org).

If you have any questions, please let me know.

—Bob Andrini

A Swift Night Out

A *Swift Night Out* is a continentwide effort to raise awareness about Chimney Swifts and Vaux's Swifts by locating and counting their roosting sites. The project was originally inspired by John Connors, formerly with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh. In 2001, Paul and Georgan Kyle, Chimney Swift rehabbers and researchers, took Connors' suggestion and further developed the program for their Chimney Swift Conservation Program. The Kyles, who live in Texas, continue to compile and publish the results.

KCA participated in its first local *Swift Night Out* during a three-day weekend, Sept. 9-11. It was an organized effort of 26 participants to locate and count Chimney Swift roosting spots. These efforts will help our group learn about Chimney Swift behaviors and roosts in Kane County. Hopefully, this event will be repeated annually and be used to increase community awareness of Chimney Swifts and to plan initiatives to conserve this declining species. Our results were also submitted to a continentwide data base, which can be found at www.chimneyswifts.org. For a detailed report, just click on *A Swift Night Out*, and then *A Swift Night Out 2016*.

Twenty-two Kane County structures, mostly chimneys, were observed for Chimney Swifts flying in to sleep for the night. We also watched one silo and one Chimney Swift tower. Seventeen of the structures had roosting Swifts, with numbers ranging from a sad one to a teeming 3,340! Some roosts sites were counted all three nights; others were counted only once. Using only the highest count from each roost, the total number of Swifts counted for the event was 7,321.

Participants either joined up in teams or monitored individually. Twenty-three participants were from eight Kane County towns: Aurora, North Aurora, Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles, Elgin, Burlington and Dundee. Debbie Wisser was instrumental to the event, with her Swift detective work to find five of seven active roosts in Elgin.

The secret to her success was using the top floor of a parking garage as her lookout to locate and count roosting spots. Jon and Joy Duerr, longtime Swift enthusiasts, located the largest roost site, counting 3,340 Chimney Swifts. This roost actually grew to 4,000 over the next week and was enjoyed by many folks. Two neighboring counties, McHenry and Dupage, were also represented among our participants. Our furthest participant was from Lawrenceville, IL, a small town southeast of Effingham. She had read about the event on the Birding Illinois Facebook page. She monitored in Lawrence County and wanted to share that she had a large roost in her chimney!

The general consensus was that it was a fun project. Here's what participants had to say:

- Rich Centeno (Aurora) was invited by two KCA members, Theresa and Greg LeCompte, to join them monitoring a roost on Saturday. As he watched 503 Chimney Swifts entering an apartment complex chimney on Galena Boulevard, he said: "I've lived in Aurora all my life, and it took 51 years for me to see something like that. I'm amazed."
- Debbie Wisser (Elgin) and Julie Long (St. Charles) formed a two-woman "Swift Squad." From the top of a parking garage in Elgin near Spring Street, they had a good vantage point to watch several chimneys. Wisser states, "Two birders, three chimneys, approximately 1,200 Swifts counted, but I'm sure just as many or more weren't counted. I have to figure out the address of one chimney in the light of day. This game is better than Pokemon Go!"

Kane County Chimney Swift Roost Sites, Sept 9-11

<u>Roost Site</u>	<u>High Count</u>
YMCA Senior Apartments, Aurora	67
Apt Complex, Aurora	553
Expert RE, Batavia	199
See Saw Day Care, Burlington	24
Parkview Elementary, Carpentersville	760
Brunner FP Silo, Dundee	1
Brunner FP Tower, Dundee	4
Burgess-Norton Co., Geneva	325
Old Elgin National Watch, Elgin	1
Fountain Square Apartments, Elgin	900+
Abbot Middle School, Elgin	1
Elgin Commerce Bldg., Elgin	120
House-Raymond St., Elgin	61
House-Monroe St., Elgin	162
Family Life Church, Elgin	153
Marberry Cleaners, St. Charles	3340
Pottowattomie Pool Bldg, St. Charles	650
TOTAL	7,321

- Al and Linda Honrath (St.Charles), new to birdwatching, counted 650 Chimney Swifts going to roost: “We had never witnessed this before and were really thrilled to see them. Thank you very much for putting the word out and letting us participate.”
- Deb Dirst (St. Charles) and Barb Arens (North Aurora) met in Batavia on Saturday night to monitor and count nearly 200 Chimney Swifts entering a crumbling chimney with an antenna obstructing one side. On Sunday, that same chimney only hosted approximately 75 Swifts. Either those missing Swifts moved to a different roost nearby, or else they began the journey south to get closer to their ultimate migration point—South America.
- Jerry Hope (Elgin) invited a friend to watch a residential chimney in Elgin after he received a tip from a chimney restoration worker that Swifts were gathering there in the evening. Jerry’s quote: “We counted 162 birds go into the chimney. We had a great time!”
- Kim Engels White (Lombard) learned about the event on our Facebook group page, Chimney Swifts Over the Fox Valley. After watching more than 1,000 roosting twice in one week in St. Charles, she reflected, “Sometimes, we think of big events in nature as happening somewhere far from our urban areas. Chimney Swifts are one of those little marvels that live amongst us every summer in our villages, towns, and cities. To see them gather together, and hear them chittering to each other, by the hundreds and even thousands before their migration to Peru, is truly a sight to behold.”

One disheartening occurrence during the weekend-long event was the discovery that one of the chimneys that once had a roost of hundreds of Swifts had been covered, most likely, by the building owner. Loss of habitat is one of the reasons this species is declining. It made me sad and angry initially. Then I realized this was a good opportunity to take one of our future visions, a Kane County Chimney Swift Advocacy Program, and make it a working plan. We need to set up a meeting with the property owner to discuss the covering of the chimney. Sometimes, it is a safety issue unrelated to the birds themselves, and sometimes it’s an education need. Often, people fear the birds will destroy property or spread disease. This is not the case with roosting Chimney Swifts. They use the chimney only at night to sleep. These flying wonders are an effective, safe, nonchemical means to control mosquitoes and other flying pests.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2016 *Swift Night Out!* It definitely takes a community to help conserve our Chimney Swifts.

—Marion Miller

Special Raffle Prize Offered at 2017 Spring Fling

At the 2017 Spring Fling, we will have a silent auction, many raffle items, and a very special prize.

Peggy Macnamara, artist in residence at the Field Museum in Chicago, has provided us with a beautiful print (30 by 22 inches). This framed print is valued at \$1,000 and would be great adorning the wall of any birdwatcher. We are selling tickets at \$5 each (or six for \$25).

For many of us, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to own one of Peggy’s works. To see more of her work, visit www.peggymacnamara.com.

Tickets can be purchased any time from Jackie Bowman (jaculinb4@gmail.com), at KCA meetings, or during the Spring Fling weekend (as long as the tickets last).



—Bob Andrini **This gorgeous Peggy Macnamara print is the grand prize at this year’s Spring Fling.**

Fermi Circle CBC Reports Lowest Species Count in Nine Years

Perhaps our birds “got outta Dodge” ahead of subzero temperatures, but the 2016 Fermi Circle Christmas Bird Count tallied just 77 species, the lowest total since 2007. Recent years have seen species counts in the high 90s. (Sixty-four species were seen in the Kane County portion of the circle.)

In terms of numbers, the top five species were, in order, Canada Goose, Mallard, House Sparrow, European Starling and Mourning Dove. No bird species were reported for the first time on the 2016 count, something that usually occurs each year.

—Joy Duerr

Fermi Circle CBC, Kane County Results

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number</u>
Canada Goose	20,310	Great Horned Owl	7
Mallard	1,866	Gadwall	6
House Sparrow	556	Cooper’s Hawk	6
European Starling	451	Golden-Crowned Kinglet	6
Mourning Dove	350	Hermit Thrush	6
Dark-Eyed Junco	349	Fox Sparrow	6
Rock Pigeon	238	Belted Kingfisher	4
Black-Capped Chickadee	226	Northern Flicker	4
Northern Cardinal	217	Tufted Titmouse	4
Common Goldeneye	216	Winter Wren	4
American Tree Sparrow	134	Swamp Sparrow	4
American Robin	103	Gull species	3
White-Breasted Nuthatch	95	American Kestrel	3
House Finch	85	Red-Breasted Nuthatch	3
American Goldfinch	83	Common Grackle	3
Downy Woodpecker	77	Cackling Goose	2
Blue Jay	70	Northern Harrier	2
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	61	Sharp-Shinned Hawk	2
American Crow	57	Rough-Legged Hawk	2
Cedar Waxwing	56	Sandhill Crane	2
Common Merganser	53	Eastern Bluebird	2
Ring-Billed Gull	44	Hooded Merganser	1
White-Throated Sparrow	44	Ring-Necked Pheasant	1
Bald Eagle	41	Eastern Screech-Owl	1
Brown Creeper	35	Long-Eared Owl	1
Red-Tailed Hawk	32	Saw-whet Owl	1
Herring Gull	31	Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker	1
Hairy Woodpecker	16	Peregrine Falcon	1
Song Sparrow	15	Savanna Sparrow	1
Great Blue Heron	13	Red-Wing Blackbird	1
White-Crowned Sparrow	9	Purple Finch	1
Rusty Blackbird	9	Pine Siskin	1

Big Rock Christmas Bird Count Tallies 72 Species

The 2016 edition of the Big Rock Christmas Bird Count presented birders with a unique complication. For the first time, the count had to be postponed due to inclement weather. Several inches of snow and colder temperatures earlier in December boded well for concentrating birds along roads and in denser undercover. But on count day, the temperatures took a steep decline (-16 F in some circle locations) and winds increased, making for dangerous conditions.

The count was rescheduled for later in the week, and 23 birders participated. Despite many lakes and rivers being frozen from the previous week's cold, the overall results were about average—72 total species. The top five high-count species were Canada Goose, European Starling, Mourning Dove, Mallard and American Robin.

Two new species were added to the CBC's historical species tally this year: Mute Swan and Redhead.

For more information about this year's numbers or the Big Rock CBC, contact Tim Balassie at tbalassie@sbcglobal.net.

—Tim Balassie

Eagles Thrill Youngsters at Inaugural Christmas Bird Count for Kids

On Dec. 28, KCA and the Fox Valley Park District teamed up to organize the first “CBC4KIDS” event at Red Oak Nature Center in North Aurora.

Twelve young birders joined their parents, staff and KCA members to hike the trails at Red Oak and look for birds. The children saw a total of 24 species. Highlights included Bald Eagle, Common Merganser, Common Goldeneye and Mute Swan.

The CBC4KIDS event is part of an effort by KCA to promote the hobby of birding, as well as conservation in general, to the county's youth by partnering with local park districts and forest preserve districts.

—Tim Balassie

World Big Year Record Broken—Again

Does the idea of taking a year off and birding the world appeal to you? Would you like to break the world record for number of species seen or heard in a calendar year? Or, are you an armchair traveler who would like to forgo getting up at 4 a.m. and carrying all your possessions on your back for a year? Whether you are gathering information for your own worldwide birding expedition or fascinated by the quests of others, Big Year birders are birding and blogging about their adventures, and we can all follow along.

For the second year in a row, the world Big Year record will change hands. Last year, Noah Stryker, an American birder, smashed the 2008 record of 4,341 held by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller from the United Kingdom. With a total of 6,042 species, Noah was able to rack up a hugely impressive number by birding for 365 days straight (www.audubon.org/features/birding-without-borders). Ruth and Alan strung together a lot of trips, but had some trips home to gather clean laundry and shore up funding, so they didn't bird continuously all year.

However, Noah won't have much longer to enjoy his record, as it has already been broken by Arjan Dwarshuis (<http://tinyurl.com/h2cy3zz>), a Dutch birder who is birding around the world and raising funds and awareness for the Birdlife Preventing Extinctions Programme (www.birdlife.org). As of Dec. 27, Arjan has recorded 6,799 species—and he still has a few more days to go.

Worldwide Big Year birding is not for the faint of heart or the poor of bank account. Both Noah and Arjan received sponsorships for their undertakings. Noah visited 42 countries and Arjan is on his 39th country now. The airfare bills alone must be staggering. This kind of birding is also not for the faint of stomach. Constant travel, exposure to many different foods, and unfamiliar germs could be a recipe for all sorts of illness. Fortunately, both Noah and Arjan seem to have cast-iron constitutions. They must also have had quite an extensive list of injections and potions before and during their respective trips. Can you say malaria, yellow fever and cholera to name but a few? Add to this lack of sleep, constant travel in a variety of conveyances, and trying to learn as many new species



Dutch birder Arjan Dwarshuis smashed the world Big Year record this year, logging 6,799 total species. Among the species he observed were these Black-and-Yellow Broadbills in Indonesia.

for an area as possible, and we get an inkling of just what an undertaking this is.

Even so, the rewards must be amazing. Some of the stories and photos I've seen on their blogs make me want to head off myself. Arjan recently saw a Horned Guan, an endangered species in Guatemala. Noah saw a Golden Masked Owl in Papua New Guinea, a bird which has only been seen by a handful of birders since the 1980s. And, the people they've met along the way fighting for conservation and sustainable living give me hope that by the time I might be ready to launch my own Big Year, there will still be plenty of amazing birds to see and discover.

—Regina McNulty

KCA Shirts Available

Did you get an ugly sweater or tie for Christmas? No worries! KCA can restore your sartorial splendor. KCA T-shirts are now available!

Decorated with KCA's stylish logo, these attractive and comfy shirts are the perfect attire for the Spring Fling this May—or any occasion. The shirts cost \$21 for the long-sleeve version, \$17 for the short-sleeve one. The shirts are being sold at cost; this is not a fund-raiser for KCA.

According to KCA president Bob Andrini, anyone wearing the shirt while birding is virtually guaranteed to get a lifer.

To order your shirt, e-mail Bob at drinibird2@gmail.com.

—John Sprovieri



Meetings, Walks and Events

Sunday, Jan. 1, 9 a.m., Bird Walk

LeRoy Oaks Forest Preserve, St. Charles.

First walk of the year. What will be your first bird of 2017? Dress for the weather!

Leader: Nancy Schnaitman, 630-365-9595

Saturday, Jan. 7, 8 a.m., Bird Walk

Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia.

Leader: Terry Murray, 630-896-3219

Wednesday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m., KCA Monthly Meeting

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, St. Charles.

“Birding Cuba,” Vern Kleen. Vern discusses Cuban endemics and other fascinating birds seen on his two trips through the varied topography of this gorgeous country.

Saturday, Jan. 14, 8 a.m., Bird Walk

Quarry Park, 400 S. Water St., Batavia.

Waterfowl, eagles and kingfishers are among the target species.

Leader: John Sprovieri, 630-776-0924

Saturday, Jan. 21, 8 a.m., Bird Walk

Fermilab, Batavia.

Waterfowl, raptors, and horned lark will be targeted.

Leader: Bob Andrini, 630-584-8387

Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 28-29, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eagle Weekend

Starved Rock Lodge, Oglesby, IL.

Sponsored by the Illinois Audubon Society, this annual event features presentations, guided walks, and live birds of prey. For more information, visit www.illinoisaudubon.org.



Recognize this bird? You will if you attend Vern Kleen's presentation on the birds of Cuba!

Saturday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m. Bird Walk

Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia.

Leader: Terry Murray, 630-896-3219

Wednesday, Feb. 8, 7 p.m., KCA Monthly Meeting

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, St. Charles.

“State of Dundee Township,” Sue Harney. Sue will discuss the past, present and future of forest preserves and open spaces in Dundee.

Saturday, Feb. 11, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Gull Frolic

Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club, Lake Michigan.

Sponsored by Illinois Ornithological Society, Illinois Audubon Society and Lake-Cook Audubon Society.

Observe waterfowl with help from birding experts, then warm up inside the Yacht Club. Includes educational presentations, informational displays, and breakfast and lunch buffets. Tickets are \$19.00 and are limited. For more information contact Bob Andrini at 630-584-8387

Saturday, Feb. 11, 8 a.m., Local Gull Watch

Fox River Dam, Elgin Public Library.

Later, the group will caravan along the Fox River, looking for gulls and other water birds.

Leader: Tim Balassie, 630-513-7345

Friday through Monday, Feb. 17-20, all day, Great Backyard Bird Count

Data gathered during this annual nationwide event helps scientists keep track of numbers and locations of birds to see trends, spot problems and develop solutions. Anyone can participate by spending at least 15 minutes (or up to all day) on one or more of the four days, counting all the various species of birds seen and reporting them on the GBBC website. Counts may be done in one’s own backyard, in forest preserves, or anywhere. Report total numbers of each species and where they are seen. For more information, call Bob Andrini at 630-584-8386 or visit <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>.

Sunday, Feb. 19, Noon to 4 p.m., Great Backyard Bird Count, St. Charles

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, St. Charles.

As part of the Great Backyard Bird Count, we will meet at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center to count birds at feeders. Audubon members will be present to help identify birds. At 3 p.m., there will be a walk around the natural area of Hickory Knolls.

Leader: Bob Andrini, 630-584-8387

Saturday, Feb. 25, 8 a.m., Bird Walk

Hazeltine Park, St. Charles

Waterfowl will be the targeted species during this walk.

Leader: Jon Duerr, 630-584-5891

Saturday, March 4, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia.

Leader: Terry Murray, 630-896-3219

Wednesday, March 8, 7 p.m., KCA Monthly Meeting

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, St. Charles.

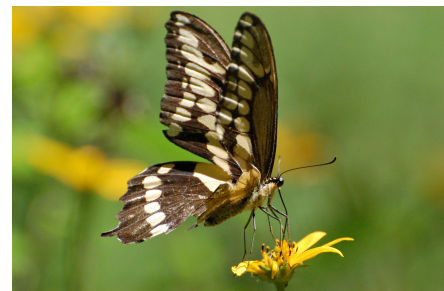
“Butterflies of Illinois,” Susan Post and Michael Jeffords.

Saturday, March 11, 8 a.m., Bird Walk

Country Roads, Kane County.

Meet in the parking lot of Hickory Knolls Discovery Center in St. Charles. This will be a caravan trip along the back roads of Kane County to look for Snow Buntings and Rough-Legged Hawks.

Leader: Jerry Hope, 630-377-1444



Illinois butterflies will be the subject of the presentation at KCA’s March meeting.

Friday through Sunday, March 17-19, Nebraska Road Trip

KCA will be leading a weekend trip to central Nebraska to see Cranes and Prairie Chickens! KCA members will meet in Kearney, NE, on Friday, March 17. From there, excursions are planned to Rowe Sanctuary in Gibbon, NE, and Calamus Ranch in Burwell, NE, to see the spectacular bird displays.

Leader: Jon Duerr, 630-584-5891

Saturday, March 25, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Waterfowl Migration, Eastern Kane County.

John Sprovieri will lead a caravan to waterfowl hotspots of eastern Kane County. Birders will meet at the east entrance of Fabyan Forest Preserve at 7 a.m. Leader: John Sprovieri, 630-776-0924

Saturday, April 1, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia.

Leader: Terry Murray, 630-896-3219

Saturday, April 8, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Oakhurst Forest Preserve, Aurora.

We will be looking for the early migrants, such as Phoebes, Field Sparrows, Towhees and Grebes.

Leader: Wes Sadler, 630-851-1384

Wednesday, April 12, 7 p.m., KCA Monthly Meeting

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, St. Charles.

Speaker TBA.

Sunday, April 23, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Bliss Woods Forest Preserve, Sugar Grove.

This is one the best locations for migrating birds.

Leader: Mary Ochsenschlager, 630-466-4922

Saturday, April 29, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve, Batavia.

Leader: Terry Murray, 630-896-3219

Saturday, May 6, 46th Annual Spring Bird Count

Kane County forest preserves.

Leader: Jon Duerr, 630-584-5891

Saturday, May 13, 7 a.m., Bird Walk

Burnidge Forest Preserve, Elgin.

The most diverse forest preserve in Kane County hosts a variety of birds.

Leader: Bill Koch



Catch spring migrants like this yellow warbler during our spring bird walks!

Kane County Audubon, A Chapter of Illinois Audubon

Chapter President	Bob Andrini, 630-584-8386
Vice President	John Sprovieri
Secretary	Nancy Schnaitman
Treasurer	Jane McMillan
Program Chair	Chuck Peterson
Field Trips	Jon Duerr
Historian	Jerry Hope
Hospitality	Sue Peterson, Carol Ludemann
Website	Chris Madsen
Publicity	Sue Wagoner
Stamps	Tim Klimowski
Ink Cartridges	Cheryl Hayes
IAS Representative	Bob Andrini and Jerry Hope
KCA website	WWW.KANECOUNTYAUDUBON.ORG