



CHICAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY  
5801-C N. Pulaski Road Chicago, IL 60646-6057

Periodicals

# COMPASS

*Navigating the world of birds and nature*

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 2

MARCH/APRIL 2013

## How Do Birds Survive Our Winters?

**B**irds are warm-blooded animals, but have a much higher metabolism than humans. Consequently, they have higher body temperatures. With some fluctuations between species and differences in weather in mind, the average bird's body temperature is 105 degrees Fahrenheit.

Birds' feathers provide remarkable insulation against the cold, and many bird species grow extra feathers as part of a late fall molt to give them thicker protection in the winter. The oil that coats the feathers also provides insulation as well as waterproofing. Their legs and feet are covered with specialized scales that minimize heat loss. By constricting blood flow to their extremities, birds can also control the temperature of their legs and feet separately from their bodies, thereby reducing heat loss even further.

Birds fluff out their feathers to create air pockets for additional insulation in cold temperatures.

It is not unusual to see a bird standing on one leg or crouched to cover both legs with its feathers to shield them from the cold. Birds also tuck their bills into their shoulder feathers for protection.

On sunny winter days, many birds will take advantage of solar heat by turning their backs to the sun, thereby exposing the largest surface of their bodies to the sun's warmth. By raising their feathers slightly, the sun is allowed to heat the skin and feathers more efficiently. Wings may also be drooped or spread while sunning, and the tail may be spread as well.

Shivering is an important way to raise metabolic rate and generate more body heat as a short term solution to extreme

cold. While shivering does require more calories, it is an effective way to stay warm—one of many good reasons to keep putting out bird food all winter long.

Many small birds, including bluebirds, chickadees and titmice, will gather in large flocks at night and crowd together in a small, tight space to share body heat. They roost in shrubbery or trees and in vacant bird-houses to conserve heat. Individual birds choose roost spots that have residual heat from the day's sunlight, such as close to the trunk of a tree or near any dark surface.

Many birds will enter a state called "torpor" to conserve energy during cold winter nights. Torpor reduces metabolism when the body temperature is lowered, therefore requiring fewer calories to maintain the proper heat. Unfortunately, torpor can be a dangerous behavior because the reduced temperature can also lead to reduced reactions and greater vulnerability to predators. In spite of the danger, humming-



*Black-capped Chickadees.*  
Courtesy of Atlantic Avenue Garden.

birds, chickadees, swifts and other types of birds regularly use torpor as a way to survive cold temperatures.



*Northern Cardinals.*

Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited.

Many birds will gorge during the fall when food sources are abundant, giving them an extra fatty layer before winter arrives. If at all possible, please continue to feed the birds all winter long and, if you can, provide fresh water. Although they can use snow as a source of water, it takes more energy to digest the cold snow than drinking unfrozen water from a birdbath. When temperatures start to dip, we don't need to worry too much about how birds keep warm. But they still need our help. If you feed the birds, please continue to feed them all winter long—providing food, water and shelter will greatly improve their chances of survival.



*Evening Grosbeak.*

Photo by Dane Adams.

## The Evening Grosbeak

**E**vening Grosbeaks are a northern bird, well known for their winter visits to the lower 48, and although their appearances have dramatically declined in recent years, there have been a number of sightings in this area during the last weeks of February. They feed on a wide variety of small fruits and seeds (along with insects and other invertebrates), and are often seen feeding on the pea-sized fruit of the Hackberry tree.

The Evening Grosbeak is a noticeable winter visitor to bird feeders during irruption years. An irruption is a dramatic, irregular migration of large numbers of birds to areas where they aren't typically found, possibly at a great distance from their normal ranges. While one or two vagrant birds of northern species may appear at southern feeders in any year, an irruption is characterized by large numbers of unexpected birds. Depending on the species, irruptions may occur in cycles from 2–10 years, or they may be much more unpredictable.

Several factors can lead to irruptive years for different birds. The most common cause is a lack of food in the birds' normal wintering grounds. Famine can force large numbers of birds to seek more plentiful habitats until the return of seeds, flowers and insects in the spring. Birds that feed on the seeds and catkins of birch, maple, pine, spruce and hemlock trees often irrupt when those types of trees have poor seed crops. Different birds of prey may also irrupt when the seed crops are poor and cannot support the necessary rodent populations for raptor food sources.

Other causes for bird irruptions include unduly harsh cold or severe weather that may force birds to find more temperate wintering grounds. Overbreeding may further deplete even plentiful food supplies. No matter what the cause of the irruption, however, it is difficult to predict where or when irrupting species may appear.

# Who are those Mysterious Green Birds ...

On occasion, people have called us to report a sighting of beautiful green birds.



Monk Parakeet. Photo by A.J. Hand.

Usually a number of them were seen perching together in a tree or on telephone wires, chattering away and looking quite comfortable, as if they had always been in the neighborhood. What are those exotic green birds anyway?

Those birds are Monk Parakeets, also known as Quaker Parrots. They originated in South America and were originally transported throughout the world as pets. In many cases, they escaped or were released and over the decades have become established populations in many areas of North America and Europe. The first known sighting in this area happened in the 1960s. An unknown number of them escaped from a transport crate at the airport, were never recaptured and have been around ever since—or so the local urban legend claims. We have heard several variations on that explanation. Whatever their origins to this area were, clearly over all this time they have had no problem adapting to our winters. And the main reason for their success is that Monk parakeets build large unique nests in trees or on manmade structures such as telephone wiring or cable lines. They contain multiple nest units made almost exclusively from sticks and are

often six feet or more in length. The structures are so well built they can be used for roosting all year round, as well as for breeding in the warm weather.



Monk Parakeet nest. Photo by Joe Nowak.

So, if you are ever lucky enough to see any of these beautiful green birds, you'll know that they are not escapees and are not in trouble, but have become successful additions to the long-term non-migratory residents of our area—and you can enjoy watching them without worrying about their safety!



Varied Thrush. Evanston, Illinois.

Photo by Joy Schmall.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR READERS

There has been some confusion about the difference between a National Audubon membership and a Chicago Chapter membership. A National membership by itself does not financially support the Chicago Audubon Chapter. National Audubon and the Chicago Chapter (and all other chapters) have entirely separate budgets (except for a small yearly stipend from National). In

other words, the Chicago Chapter has always carried the burden of all costs of producing and mailing this newsletter and other types of mailings that we have been sending to both the Chapter members and the National members in this area. Because of this separation in budgets and because we need local support, we are asking that you consider becoming a Chapter member at this time. Chapter membership will not only help with our immediate need

to reduce costs related to the newsletter, it will give direct financial assistance to our local programs and goals and enrich the energy and support of the Chapter membership base. If you would like to become a Chicago Audubon Chapter member, please fill out the form below and send it to our office.

**Chicago Audubon Society does not rent, lease, trade, or otherwise disclose any membership information whatsoever.**

### Chicago Audubon Membership Form

You may mail in this form or you may charge your membership online using our secure website, [www.chicagoaudubon.org](http://www.chicagoaudubon.org), or call the office at 773-539-6793 and charge your membership over the phone.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Minimum yearly membership: \$25  
We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover.  
Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_  
Card number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your completed form to: **Chicago Audubon Society · 5801-C North Pulaski Rd · Chicago, Illinois 60646**

## COMPASS

Chicago Audubon Society  
North Park Village  
5801-C N. Pulaski Road  
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[www.chicagoaudubon.org](http://www.chicagoaudubon.org)  
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Report sightings to: 773-539-6793

Report injured birds to Chicago Bird Collision Monitors: 773-988-1867

Website: [www.chicagoaudubon.org](http://www.chicagoaudubon.org)

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# Congratulations to the Recipients of the Chicago Audubon Society 2013 Environmental Awards!

The Chicago Audubon Society Biennial Environmental Awards honor people from many walks of life for their contributions to conservation and birding in the Chicagoland area. The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the following Awardees for 2013.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Excellence in Environmental Reporting</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Barbara Brotman</b> <i>Chicago Tribune</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Educator</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"><b>David Brooks</b> Naturalist Spring Valley Nature Center</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"><b>John Elliott</b> Naturalist (retired) Forest Preserve District of Cook County</td> </tr> </table>	<b>David Brooks</b> Naturalist Spring Valley Nature Center	<b>John Elliott</b> Naturalist (retired) Forest Preserve District of Cook County	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Political Service</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ann B. Maine</b>, President <i>Lake County Forest Preserve District</i></p>
<b>David Brooks</b> Naturalist Spring Valley Nature Center	<b>John Elliott</b> Naturalist (retired) Forest Preserve District of Cook County			
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Avocation</i></p> <p><b>Wayne Svoboda</b>, volunteer at NPVNC, former President of the Ft. Dearborn Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Vocation</i></p> <p><b>Fran Harty</b> of The Nature Conservancy and formerly of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Group</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Friends of the Chicago River</b> (Margaret Frisbie, Director)</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Single Act (Individual Avocation)</i></p> <p><b>Sonny Cohen</b>, for protecting and enhancing natural habitat at Ft. Sheridan Forest Preserve.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Single Act (Individual Vocation)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Steve Silic and Jim Phillips</b> Fisheries Biologists <i>Forest Preserve District of Cook County</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protector of the Environment Single Act (Group)</i></p> <p><b>Friends of Hackmatack</b>, for helping make Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge a reality.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Service to Chicago Area Birders</i></p> <p><b>Joe Lill</b>, former President of Chicago Audubon Society, for his work with Lister's Corner and Chicago Audubon Birdathon!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>First Friend of Chicago Audubon</i></p> <p><b>North Park University</b>, for many years of hosting Birding America conferences with a generous hospitality that enhanced the conference experience for all who attended.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Good Business Neighbor</i></p> <p><b>Good Earth Greenhouse and Café</b>, River Forest, for hosting Chicago Audubon Fall Bird Seed pick-up days.</p>		

## Environmental Awards Banquet

Saturday, April 20

In honor of the Biennial Environmental Awardees, the Chicago Audubon Society will hold its Awards Banquet on April 20 at the Silver Stallion Restaurant in Des Plaines. Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. (cash bar at 5:30 p.m.). The evening's program, *Birds of Thailand*, will be presented by Steven Bailey and Sheryl DeVore. The

dinner is \$32 per person and the choices of entrée are chicken, salmon, or vegetarian. The Silver Stallion Restaurant in Des Plaines is located at 1275 Lee/Manheim Avenues (between Algonquin and Oakton). Contact Alan Anderson at [casresearch@comcast.net](mailto:casresearch@comcast.net) to reserve a dinner or if you have questions. Everyone is welcome!

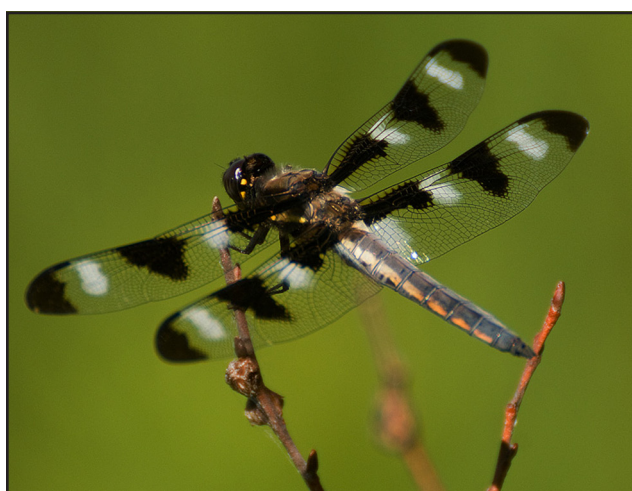


## Annual Chapter Meeting and Program on March 21

7:00 p.m.

*Important meeting for Members to attend!*

Chicago Audubon Chapter Members will have the opportunity to vote on the up-coming slate of possible new board members. At the January meeting of the Chicago Audubon Board, the Nominating Committee (Alan Anderson, Bonnie Duman, and Jeff Sanders) submitted a slate of nominees for three-year terms as Board members: Bobbi Asher, Suzanne Checchia, Anne Darnley, Elizabeth de la Baume, Sheryl DeVore, Rogert Sliwinski.



*Twelve-spotted Skimmer (male). Photo by Roger Shamley.*

The evening's program, *Damsels & Dragonflies*, will be presented by Chicago Audubon President, Roger Shamley, and Board Member, Craig Stettner. The program and the meeting are open to both Chapter members and non-members, so please feel free to bring family and friends. Gather at 7:00 p.m. for socializing; the meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. For more

information or directions, call the Chicago Audubon office at 773-539-6793. We look forward to seeing you!!

## Eagle Optics Day

April 27, 2013

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



**North Park Village Nature Center  
5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D**

This is our annual visit from the largest independent dealer of high quality binoculars, scopes, and all types of optical equipment. A variety of equipment will be on display and experts will be available all day to answer questions and give guidance. Parking is free and there will be light refreshments. For those who have never attended one of our Eagle Optics Days and have never been to the Nature Center, please call our office for information and directions: 773-539-6793. A portion of sales for the day goes to support the programs of the Chicago Audubon Society. This event is open to the public. Bring family and friends!

### *Early Morning Bird Walk on Eagle Optics Day*

This morning walk on Eagle Optics Day (April 27) will take place at the incredible Magic Hedge on the lakefront at Montrose. Be sure to dress for the early morning chill. Meet at Montrose Point at 7:00 a.m., see many migratory birds, leave around 9:30 for North Park Village Nature Center to warm up with hot coffee, tea and some bird talk. Then starting around 10:00 a.m., enjoy Eagle Optics Day, as described above. If you have questions about the Walk, please contact the leader, Jeff, at [yellowstart5@yahoo.com](mailto:yellowstart5@yahoo.com). You do not need to be a member of Chicago Audubon to join any of our walks!





Bright lights from buildings, along with reflective or transparent window and lobby glass, are hazards for birds migrating through Chicago.

Each year Chicago Bird Collision Monitors recover more than 5000 birds that have suffered collisions in the downtown area.

With your participation our rescue and prevention efforts can be expanded and more birds can be saved.

**YOU CAN HELP:**

- Join a **morning rescue team.**
- Monitor a building** where you live or work.
- Transport birds** to wildlife rehabilitation centers.
- Support **collision prevention** work.
- Assist in **public outreach** and awareness programs.

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**Reminder to our readers:**

The Compass can be read and enjoyed in color on our website, [chicagoaudubon.org](http://chicagoaudubon.org). Just click on the word "Compass" in the top row of links on the homepage to visit our archives. Don't miss these wonderful birds in living color! For historical value, we have added a link to the very first Chicago Audubon newsletter. This link is sitting on top of the Archive list. Enjoy!



*Clymene Moth.*  
Photo by Roger Shamley.

**Calendar of Events**

**Birdwalks, Workdays, Special events**

**March/April 2013**

**MARCH 21—MEMBERS ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM:**

**Damsels & Dragonflies.** North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D. Chicago Audubon Chapter Members will have the opportunity to vote on the up-coming slate of possible new board members. At the January meeting of the Chicago Audubon Board, the Nominating Committee (Alan Anderson, Bonnie Duman, and Jeff Sanders) submitted a slate of nominees for three-year terms as Board members: Bobbi Asher, Suzanne Checchia, Anne Darnley, Elizabeth de la Baume, Sheryl DeVore, Robert Sliwinski.

The *Damsels & Dragonflies* Program will be presented by Chicago Audubon President, Roger Shamley, and Board Member, Craig Stettner. The program and the meeting are open to both Chapter members and non-members, so please feel free to bring family and friends. Gather at 7:00 p.m. for socializing; the meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. For more information or directions, call the Chicago Audubon office at 773-539-6793. We look forward to seeing you!!

**APRIL 20—ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS BANQUET.**

This Awards dinner will be held to honor people from many walks of life who have been chosen by the Chicago Audubon Society for their contributions to conservation and birding in the Chicagoland area. The Banquet will be held at the Silver Stallion Restaurant in Des Plaines. Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. (cash bar opens at 5:30 p.m.). Dinner is \$32 per person; choices of entrees are chicken, salmon, or vegetarian. The evening's program, *Birds of Thailand*, will be presented by Steven Bailey and Sheryl DeVore.

The Silver Stallion Restaurant is located at 1275 Lee/Manheim Avenues in Des Plaines (between Algonquin and Oakton). Contact Alan Anderson at [casresearch@comcast.net](mailto:casresearch@comcast.net) to reserve a dinner or if you have questions. Everyone is welcome!

**APRIL 27—ANNUAL EAGLE OPTICS DAY. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D.**

This is our annual visit from the largest independent dealer of high quality binoculars, scopes, and all types of optical equipment. A variety of equipment will be on display and experts will be available all day to answer questions and give guidance. Parking is free and there will be light refreshments. For those who have never attended one of our Eagle Optics Days and have never been to the Nature Center, please call our office for information and directions: 773-539-6793. A portion of sales for the day goes to support the programs of the Chicago Audubon Society. This event is open to the public. Bring family and friends!

**APRIL 27—ANNUAL PRE-EAGLE-OPTICS DAY BIRD WALK AT MONTROSE POINT AT THE LAKE (MAGIC HEDGE), starting at 7:15 a.m.**

Plan on joining this special pre-Eagle Optics Day bird walk field trip at Montrose Point from 7:15 to 9:30 a.m. All levels of birders are welcome. Group leader will be Jeff Sanders of Chicago Audubon. The walk will end in time for everyone to head over to North Park Village Nature Center for our Annual Eagle Optics Day. If you have questions or need directions, please contact Jeff at [yellowstart5@yahoo.com](mailto:yellowstart5@yahoo.com).

**MAY 2—CHICAGO AUDUBON PROGRAM: The Natural History of Madagascar. The Program and Meeting will be held at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D. Meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.**

The evening's program will be presented by Josh Engel of the Bird Division of the Field Museum. Nearly half of Madagascar's 250 species of birds are found nowhere else in the world, nor is the majority of its other wildlife. Josh has led many birding and natural history tours to that remote part of the world. His presentation will highlight the extraordinary birds and other wildlife found only there, with a beautifully illustrated virtual tour through the spiny desert, across the grasslands and deep into the rainforest. Please attend this wonderful program and bring family and friends. Our programs are always open to non-members as well as members. For information or directions, call our office at 773-539-6793. Everyone is welcome!

**MAY 18—BIRDATHON 2013! The 14th Annual Beecher Cup Competition (and more!!!)**

This is the year! The Chicago Audubon Society Birdathon will be expanding the possibilities for involvement; maybe one of these categories will fit you and your friends. The goal is to see how many species can be identified on Saturday, May 18th, 2013. The team with the highest number of species will take home the coveted Beecher Cup. This year, for the first time, we're adding a number of choices. Put together a team and compete in the category of your choice!

The competition categories, traditional and new, are: **Open**—The traditional Big Day challenge; all species identified between midnight on

May 18th and midnight on May 19th can be counted. **Dawn-to-Dusk**—All species identified between 5:00 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. may be counted. **Site Big Day**—A team chooses one site (a city park, a forest preserve, etc.) and then birds the heck out of it! This is the perfect choice for a team that can only bird for a few hours. **Muscle-powered (on foot)**—Once the clock starts, all species must be identified without using any other mode of transportation. **Muscle-powered (bicycle)**—Once the clock starts, all species must be identified without using any motorized form of transportation.

**Registration:** To register a team (or ask any questions), please contact Joe Lill at [trptjoe@aol.com](mailto:trptjoe@aol.com). This is an important fundraiser for Chicago Audubon programs and goals. Come join the fun!!!

**WOODED ISLAND BIRD WALKS. JACKSON PARK. Every Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. and every Saturday at 8:00 a.m.**

These wonderful walks continue throughout the year. Bring binoculars, field guides, and dress for the weather. Many species are seen. Meet at Clarence Darrow Bridge, just south of Museum of Science and Industry. For details and directions, contact Pat Durkin at [pat.durkin@comcast.net](mailto:pat.durkin@comcast.net). Everyone is welcome!

**SKOKIE LAGOONS WORKDAYS. 10:00 a.m. monthly, every second Saturday.**

These workdays are sponsored by Chicago Audubon and are continuous throughout the year. Activities include buckthorn cutting, brush pile burning and other management endeavors. Meet at the Tower Road parking lot, east of the lagoon bridge. For further information, please call Dave Kosnik at 847-456-6368. Everyone is welcome!