



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

Periodicals

COMPASS

Navigating the world of birds and nature

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JULY/AUGUST 2014



"Room for one more?"
Piping Plover and chicks. Photo by Michael Milicia/Solent News & Photo Agency.

The Piping Plover

The Piping Plover is a small shorebird that nests in three geographic areas in the United States: The Great Plains states, the shore of the Great Lakes, and the shores of the Atlantic Coast. All of these populations winter on the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts in the United States.

They construct their nests on wide, flat, open, sandy beaches that have very little grass or other vegetation. The female lays four eggs in a small, shallow nest which is lined with pebbles or broken shells. Both parents care for the eggs and chicks. When the chicks hatch, they are able to run about and feed themselves within hours. However, because they are unable to maintain their own body temperature during that first week of life, they must frequently huddle together under protective parental wings to share the warmth. This is called "brooding." Miraculously, one month later they can fly.

Habitat destruction from commercial and residential building along shorelines has destroyed much of their preferred nesting places. However, through the efforts of the US Fish & Wildlife



Piping Plover nest.
Photo by Kerri Dikun.



Piping Plover chick.
Photo by Debbie Owen.

programs, and private organizational and individual efforts, they are slowly returning. Since first listed as an endangered species in 1985, the number of breeding pairs has risen to 66 in 2013 which is the second highest breeding pair total since the Great Lakes Piping Plover was first listed as endangered—and for quite a long time before that. So, if you are walking a lonely stretch of beach and you come across one of their nests, please walk away quickly. They are very shy of human activity.

For more information about the efforts of the US Fish & Wildlife, and organizational and individual volunteer efforts to bring up the Piping Plover population, please visit www.fws.gov/midwest/EastLansing/te/pipl/2013FieldSeason.html.

The Editor



"Home Sweet Home!"
Piping Plover and chicks. Photo by Michael Milicia/Solent News & Photo Agency.

The word *Birdathon* is a combining of the words *bird watching* and *marathon* to describe a friendly sport which originated in England years ago. For the past fourteen years, the Chicago Audubon Society has held the Annual Dr. William S. Beecher Birdathon! Cup Challenge as one of our major fundraising events. It involves teams of people competing to see how many different species of birds they can identify within a specified time limit. Here are some of the exciting highlights of last month's Birdathon! competition as described by the President of Chicago Audubon, Dave Willard.

~The Editor

Chicago Audubon Society Birdathon! 2014 Great Fun and Birds Galore!

On May 17, eight teams set out for the forests, marshes and lakes of Cook and Lake Counties as part of the 16th annual *Birdathon!* which raises funds to support the conservation programs of the Chicago Audubon Society. *Field's Flickers* (Josh Engel, Ben Winger, Ethan Gyllenhaal) and the *Bobolinkers* (Sheryl DeVore, Steve Bailey) "competed" in the Big Day

category, starting their days just after midnight and birding late into the following evening. The *Toucan'ts* (Craig Stettner, Tricia Walker, Nicole Wagner, Nick Spackman) walked from dawn to dusk in Spring Creek Forest Preserve, while the *Meandering Mollymawks* (Mary Hennen, Ben Marks, Kevin Swagel, Dave Willard) did the same along the lakefront from Grant Park to Jackson Park. Joe Lill and Jill Anderson (*The Steel Belted Kingfishers*) spent the day checking lakefront parks. Chris Van Wassenhove and Jeff Sanders (*The Yellowstarts*) checked out spots throughout Cook County. Megan Bales and Cindy Buettgen (*The Green B. Birders*) were able to spend several hours at Skokie Lagoons, and Robert Sliwinski (*The Wild Rooster*) flew solo at several sites near Morton Grove.

Steve predicted that the *Bobolinkers* first species would be American Woodcock and to Sheryl's surprise, minutes after their midnight start, they were listening to woodcocks display just blocks from their home.

Meanwhile, Josh was oversleeping, but despite that, the *Flickers* had some good night birding. They had surpassed the 100 species mark by 8:00 a.m. The *Toucan'ts* had to wait until 5:45 a.m. to park at Spring Creek Forest Preserve, and then spent the next fourteen hours on foot (seeing only two other people for the duration of the day). They were minutes away from being locked in when

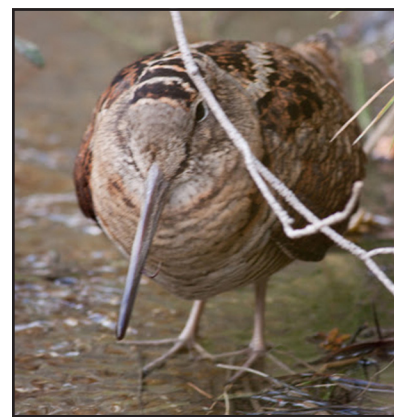
they returned in the evening. Kevin caught a train in Evanston at 3:45 a.m. to meet the rest of the *Mollymawks* and had to escape gang warfare that broke out on the train (with guns and fire extinguishers). He still caught up to his team just as Ben Marks spotted a Western Grebe off of Northerly Island. Joe and Jill were at Lincoln Park just at dawn and one of their first birds was a singing Yellow-throated Warbler.

By the time all teams had called it a day, the overall list stood at 184 which ties 2005 for the all time Chicago Audubon *Birdathon!* record. *Field's Flickers*, as they have in recent years, found the most species at 155; the *Bobolinkers* finished with 132. The *Toucan'ts* took top honors for a walking team and for a single site with 97 species. *The Steel Belted Kingfishers*

found 94, the *Mollymawks* 91, *The Yellowstarts* 84, *The Wild Rooster* 55 and *The Green B. Birders* 33. There were many highlights (check out the complete lists at www.chicago-audubon.org).



Yellow-throated Warbler.
Photo by Larry Ditto.



Woodcock.
Photo by Bob Wright.



King Rail with chick.
Photo by Noppadol Paothong.

Continued on Page 2 ...

Birdathon! 2014 continued ...



Eastern Meadowlark.
Photo by Jon Sleger.



Lesser Yellowlegs.
Photo by Nick Kontonicolos.



King Rail.
Photo by L.B. Wales.

Perhaps most amazing were two different King Rails found by the *Flickers* and *Bobolinkers*—the Lake County bird almost walked across Sheryl's feet and she described feeling almost as if she had won the lottery.

Josh's description of his team's final stop as dusk approached pretty much sums up the fun and excitement of a Birdathon:

"*Field's Flickers* finished their day at the Bartel Grasslands, hoping to add a few shorebirds to the day's list. We quickly found the two new birds that we knew would be easy, Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark. We donned our rubber boots and headed out into the flooded fields. We quickly found Lesser Yellowlegs, but we kept on walking hoping for more. All of a sudden Ben perked up, "What's that rail?" Sure enough, a King Rail was

calling. We backtracked to the area from which it was calling; we never could get a view of it but we were able to get recordings. As we tried in vain to see the rail, a Northern Harrier flew past, harassed by crows, not an expected bird on a Cook County big day. We headed back to the car—flushing the day's only Wilson's Snipe on the way—to check some of the roadside wetlands in the area, where we picked up another new shorebird, Greater Yellowlegs. We checked a Great Horned Owl nest in the fading light, but it wasn't there. We now had a shot for one more bird, so we returned to the main parking area and as if on cue, a Common Nighthawk, our eighth new species at Bartel and species #155 for the day, sailed overhead. All-in-all it was a great day to be out!"

Dave Willard
President, Chicago Audubon Society



Northern Harrier.
Photo by Gordon Ellmers.



Nighthawk. Photo by Bill Bouton.

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

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EAGLE OPTICS IS COMING!



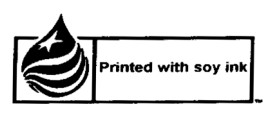
October 11, 2014
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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 supplies. If you are thinking of making a purchase or just have questions, mark your calendars for October 11 because this is a great opportunity to talk to the experts—and possibly even make a purchase. (No purchase necessary to ask questions!) And for those of you who have never attended one of these events, please note that it is open to the public. Friends and family are welcome. If you have questions or need directions, call Chicago Audubon office at 773-539-6793.

Bird Walk: This is a special opportunity to begin October 11 on a positive note—plan on joining a bird walk field trip at Montrose Point (the Magic Hedge) from 7:00 to 9:30 a.m. Meet at the Magic Hedge. Group leader will be Chicago Audubon's Jeff Sanders. The Walk will finish in time to be off to the Nature Center at North Park Village for coffee, tea, and some bird talk. Then starting around 10:00 a.m. you can enjoy Eagle Optics Day right there at the Nature Center. If you have any questions about the Walk, contact Jeff at yellowstart5@yahoo.com.

Eagle Optics generously donates a percentage of all sales on Eagle Optics Day to Chicago Audubon.



Why do some birds eat their own feathers?



Red-necked Grebe.
Photo by Paul Higgins.

Fish-eating birds such as the Horned Grebe and the Red-necked Grebe do not readily digest the bones of the fish that they consume. To solve that problem, these birds pluck and eat some of their own feathers. The feathers create a filter of sorts within the bird's stomach before the bones can enter the intestine. Consequently, the fish bones are trapped by the feather filter and slowly dissolve until they can be more easily passed—a very practical arrangement! The parents even feed feathers to their chicks to get the plug started early.



Horned Grebe.
Photo by Scott Franke.

CBCM Springs into Action!

After a season that began in freezing temperatures (brushing snow aside to find birds on the sidewalk!) and continued through some very wet days, Chicago Bird Collision Monitors (CBCM) collected hundreds of migratory birds in the downtown area between March and June. Volunteer teams began patrolling before sunrise to locate birds that had arrived in Chicago during the previous evening and early morning hours. Confused by bright lights and the transparent or reflective glass of windows and lobbies, warblers, kinglets, sparrows, hummingbirds, woodcocks, vireos, brown creepers—more than 130 species—are found dead or injured after striking buildings.

Volunteer John Kelly and his son Ryan made a “royal” discovery while they made their early morning rounds one May morning. They came upon a marsh bird—certainly out of place downtown and likely to be either a sora or Virginia rail that are frequent victims of collisions during migration.

The bird was understandably wary and eluded capture by flying off into



Rescued King Rail.
Photo by Annette Prince.

another section of the loop. John and Ryan persevered searching the streets in the direction they saw the bird fly. They located the bird several blocks away, confused and striking against the glass of a downtown building lobby. Startled by a passerby, the bird made one last flight across the street and was stunned as it hit another window. John and Ryan were equally stunned to discover that the bird they rescued was a King Rail!

This species lives year round in freshwater marshes along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, with some birds migrating as far as northern parts of the Midwest/ Great Lakes. Populations are declining in the north due to the loss of habitat and the harmful effects of farm chemical runoff into wetlands. This migrant was the first King Rail found downtown by CBCM in its more than eleven years of operation—and it certainly made John's life list.

The King Rail suffered head and wing trauma from its multiple strikes against glass. It was taken to Willowbrook Wildlife Center for rehabilitation as one of the thousands of birds Chicago Bird Collision Monitors rescue each year. The bird recovered from its injuries and was released into a wetland habitat in late June.

Chicago Bird Collision Monitors operates as a volunteer conservation project with Chicago Audubon Society. For more information on collisions and the work CBCM does, visit www.birdmonitors.net or call 773-988-1867.

To help more migratory birds have a safe passage through our urban area, become a volunteer or make a donation to CBCM at chicagoaudubon.org/pages/CBCM.shtml.

*Annette Prince, Director
Chicago Bird Collision Monitors*



*Chicago Bird Collision Monitors,
John and Ryan*

Editor's erratum: On Page 2 of the May-June issue, the caption of the photo on the upper left side of the page misidentifies the person in the photo as Steve Kelling of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. In fact, the person in the photo is Fran Harty of The Nature Conservancy. My apologies to both gentlemen.

The Editor



The Annual Birdseed Sale is Coming!

The September–October issue will have all the details for our upcoming annual Birdseed Sale in October. Please pass the word to anyone you know that likes to feed the birds but may not know about our sale—high quality seed at reasonable prices. As you know, this is a major fundraiser for Chicago Audubon projects and goals.

We thank you for all your past support and look forward to hearing from you in the fall!

Left: Goldfinches at birdfeeder.
Photo courtesy backyardchirper.com



*Goldfinch (female) and
Black-capped Chickadee at birdfeeder.*
Photo by Chet Gottfried.





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.

For more information:
www.birdmonitors.net
 773-988-1867

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 or you may join online at our website (chicagoaudubon.org).

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

Chicago Audubon Membership Form

If you wish to become a new member or to renew an existing membership, you may either mail in this form or charge your membership online (chicagoaudubon.org). You may also make a straight donation with this form or online. If you prefer, you may call the office with your credit card information (773-539-6793).

Your name

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Calendar of Events

July/August 2014

Birdwalks, Workdays, Programs

JULY 15 AT 6:30 P.M. GET TO KNOW THE BIRDS IN YOUR BACKYARDS AND NEIGHBORHOOD. Enjoy their beauty and become more aware of what they are doing as you watch them. Location: The Roden Branch, Chicago Public Library, 6083 N. Northwest Hwy, Chicago. This presentation will help you learn more about the lives, behaviors, and songs of your neighborhood birds and what you can do to attract them to your yard. This is an interactive, multi-media presentation with demonstrations and exhibits that will be informative for all ages. The program will be presented by Roberta Asher, Chicago Audubon Board Member. *If you have any questions or need directions, please contact the Roden Branch at 312-744-1478. Open to all ages.*

OCTOBER 11. EAGLE OPTICS DAY! AT THE NORTH PARK VILLAGE NATURE CENTER. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This is a new date for Eagle Optics Day which was usually held in April each year, but the location will be the same as usual: North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D. Mark your calendars for our annual visit from the largest independent dealer of high quality binoculars, scopes, and all types of optical supplies. A variety of equipment will be on display and experts will be available all day to answer questions and give guidance. For those of you who have never attended one of our Eagle Optics Day events, please note that this event is open to the public. A percentage of all sales is donated to Chicago Audubon. *If you have questions or need directions, call Chicago Audubon*

office at 773-539-6793. Bring family and friends!

OCTOBER 11 BIRD WALK. An early morning bird walk will take place on the same day as Eagle Optics Day described above. Meet at Montrose Point Magic Hedge at 7:00 a.m. and then after the walk (around 9:30) leave Montrose 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 which takes place right there at the Nature Center and runs until 3:00 p.m. *For any questions about the bird walk, contact Jeff at yellowstart5@yahoo.com.*

WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR: WOODED ISLAND BIRD WALKS IN 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. Everyone is welcome! *For details and directions, contact Pat Durkin at pat.durkin@comcast.net.*

MONTHLY, EVERY SECOND SATURDAY. SKOKIE LAGOONS WORKDAYS AT 10:00 a.m. 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. Everyone is welcome! *For further information, please call Dave Kosnik at 847-456-6368.*

Reminder to our readers:

The Compass can be read and enjoyed in color on our website, chicagoaudubon.org. Just click on the word "Compass" in the top row of links on the home page 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.*