



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

Periodicals

# COMPASS

*Navigating the world of birds and nature*

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 4

JULY/AUGUST 2015



Photo by Keith Carver.



Photo Gaye Kelly.



Photo courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife.

## The Osprey

### *Magnificent Hawk and Extraordinary Parent*

An Osprey may travel more than 160,000 migration miles during its 15-to-20-year lifetime. They also have an unusual feature among hawks—a reversible outer toe that allows them to grasp their prey with two toes in front and two behind. With this grasping ability and the barbed pads on the soles of their feet, they are able to tightly grip slippery fish. They are excellent anglers, and are the only hawk on the continent that eat, almost exclusively, live fish. When flying with prey in their talons, an Osprey will line up its catch head first for least wind resistance. Over several studies, Ospreys were found to have caught fish on at least one in every four dives, with success rates sometimes as high as 70 percent. Their habitat preference includes almost any expanse of shallow, fish-filled water, including rivers, lakes, reservoirs, lagoons, swamps, and marshes. Whatever the location, their nesting habitat must include an adequate supply of accessible fish within a maximum of about 12 miles of the nest.

Upon sight of its prey when on the hunt for fish, the Osprey makes a spectacular dive, descending swiftly to plunge feet first into the water, often submerging completely. At other times, he will fly close to the water's surface to make a shallow scoop for a fish just below the surface—and he hardly gets wet! Successful hunts in early season often end with a beautiful courtship flight performed by the male—an undulating aerial display of the male's power of flight—all for the benefit of his watching mate.

Osprey are fairly tolerant of the presence of humans and will readily build a nest on manmade structures, such as

telephone poles, channel markers, duck blinds, and nest platforms designed especially for them. Such platforms have become an important tool in reestablishing their presence in areas where they had disappeared.

Ospreys mate for life and they return to the same nest site year after year. Their very first nest may be relatively small, less than 2.5 feet in diameter and 3-6 inches deep. However, after generations of adding to the family home year after year, nests can build up to 10-13 feet deep and 3-6 feet in diameter. The spring courtship is the beginning of five months of the male and female harmoniously working together to

construct the nest and raise their young. The nests are built of sticks and lined with bark, sod, grasses, vines, algae, or flotsam and jetsam. Both male and female arrange the nest, and the male usually fetches most of the nesting material—sometimes breaking dead sticks off nearby trees as he flies past.

A clutch of three or four eggs are laid by the third week of April. The eggs will be incubated for nearly five weeks by both parents, although the female does most of the incubating and the male does most of the fishing. While she is incubating, he brings fish to the nest and tenderly feeds her bits and pieces many times a day.

If you would like to observe these and other birds as they build their nests and raise their young next spring, you can access bird cams for Osprey and other species at [allaboutbirds.com](http://allaboutbirds.com) and [audubon.org](http://audubon.org). However, be forewarned. Once you begin watching, it's easy to become addicted!

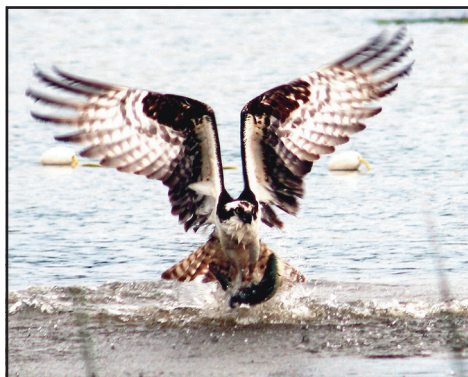


Photo by Michael Utin.

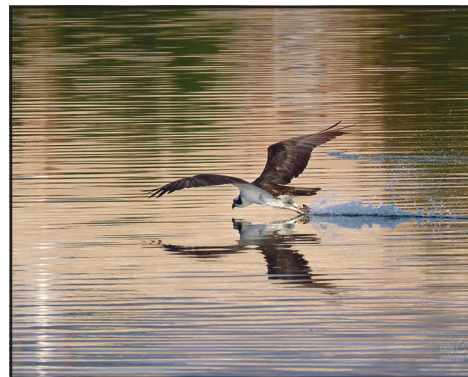


Photo by Cathy Andersen.



Photo by Nick Chill.



Photo Gaye Kelly.



Photo by Andy Morffew.



Photo by Gaye Kelly.



Photo by Nick Chill.

## Birdathon 2015 was a Great Success!

Six teams participated in the 2015 Chicago Audubon Society Birdathon on the weekend of May 16–17, and all teams combined found 172 species. Field's Flickers (Josh Engel, Ben Winger and John Bates) spent all day Saturday in Cook County, and found the highest total at 156 species. Highlights were a King Rail, a great variety of shorebirds including Stilt and White-rumped Sandpipers, and the climax of the day when they topped off their list of 28 warblers with the Kirtland's Warbler that had been found earlier in the day at Montrose. The Steel Belted Kingfishers (Joe Lill and Jeff Sanders) chose to bird Lake County on Sunday, and found things

to be much less active. They amassed a list of 101 species, with LeConte's Sparrow and Brewer's Blackbird among the highlights. The Toucan's, a group from Harper College led by Craig Stettner, spent the day walking at Spring Creek Preserve near Barrington. They had fewer species (83) than last year, but saw the only Sandhill Cranes for the day. A second walking team, the Meandering Mollymawks (Mary Hennen, Ben Marks, Tom Gnoske and Dave Willard), spent the day wandering from Grant Park to Jackson Park and found 104 species, with a Harris' Sparrow along the north side of Burnham Harbor the most noteworthy. Robert Sliwinski and Peter

Lowther each birded alone. Robert found 71 species at the new Clark Street Beach preserve and the woods along the north branch of the Chicago River, while Peter found 58 between Bartel Grasslands and the Isaac Walton Preserve. On Sunday, we were honored to have the Illinois Young Birders participate for the first time. The group of 16, led by Matt Cvetas and Josh Engel, found 65 species in the Palos area, and added Black-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker and Carolina Wren to our overall total. We thank every one for their enthusiastic participation, and we look forward to even more teams next year!

*Dave Willard, Birdathon Coordinator*

## COMPASS

CHICAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

5801-C North Pulaski Road  
Chicago, Illinois 60646-6057  
www.chicagoaudubon.org  
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**Report injured birds to Chicago Bird Collision Monitors:** 773-988-1867

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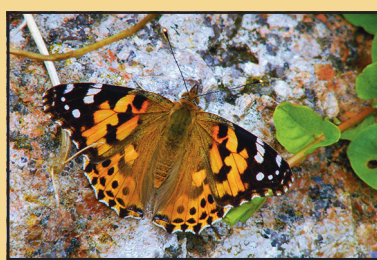


Photo by Mathias Liebing.

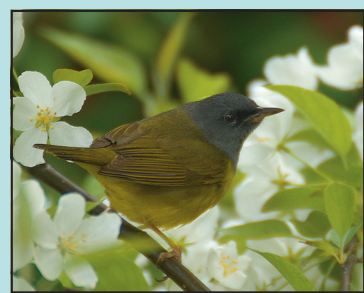


The Painted Lady. Photo by Roger Shamley.



Photo by Tim Alps.

The Painted Lady butterfly ranges on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. They prefer nectar from plants three to six feet high, especially thistles—but also aster, cosmos, blazing star, ironweed and joe-pye weed. Other flowers also visited include red clover, buttonbush, privet, and milkweeds. From the deserts of northern Mexico, the Painted Lady migrates and temporarily colonizes the United States and Canada south of the Arctic. It is also known as the Thistle Butterfly because of the caterpillars' food preference. Interestingly, the Painted Lady is also known as the Cosmopolitan because it is the most widely distributed butterfly in the world.



Mourning Warbler.  
Photo by Roger Shamley.

### Upcoming Chicago Audubon Program Tuesday, September 8

Location: North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Building D. The evening's program, *Climate Change and Birds in the Chicago Area*, will be presented by Doug Stotz, Senior Conservation Ecologist of the Field Museum. Join us for socializing at 7:00 p.m. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. This is open to the public, members and non-members. Please bring family and friends!



Piping Plover.  
Photo by Roger Shamley.

## EAGLE OPTICS IS COMING!

Happily, we have a firm date for next year already!

April 23, 2016  
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 April 23 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 April 23 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.*

## Fruit Eaters—Seed Eaters



Scarlet Tanager. Photo by Jim Ridley.

**A** surprising number of birds love to eat fruit! There are a number of species that might be attracted to your backyard if you put out some fruit. For instance, Orioles love oranges! (They also eat beetles, grasshoppers, spiders, and other fruits such as mulberries and wild black cherries.)

Metal hangers are available with a sharp end to the bottom curve that is especially designed for spiking halves of oranges. They can be hung from almost anywhere including tree branches and preferably in the shade. Or you could just place half an orange on a backyard table or in the elbow of a tree branch. Or you could improvise and make your own version of a hanger—anything that works.

**Other species that are particularly drawn to oranges:** Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, Orchard Orioles, Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, Gray Catbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

**Grapes, raisins and currants are also attractive to many species:** Soak the raisins and currants in water overnight before putting them out. A number of species will be attracted to them, especially Northern Mockingbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings, Gray Catbirds, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, House Finches, Robins, and Towhees. Place any fruit separately from the regular seed. It doesn't need to be far from the seed—just don't mix the two together.

**Locate bird feeders at different levels:** A diverse mixture of seeds will attract the greatest variety of birds. To avoid waste, offer different seeds in different feeders. Black oil sunflower seed appeals to the greatest number of birds. Offer sunflower seeds, nyjer (thistle) seeds, and peanuts in separate feeders. When using blends, choose mixtures containing sunflower seeds, millet, and cracked corn—the three most popular types of birdseed. Birds that are sunflower specialists will readily eat the sunflower seed and toss the millet and corn to the ground, to be eaten by ground-feeding birds such as sparrows and juncos.

**Mixtures of peanuts, nuts, and dried fruit attract woodpeckers, nuthatches, and titmice.** A relatively few species prefer milo, wheat, and oats, which are featured in less expensive blends. Sparrows, juncos, and towhees usually feed on the ground, while finches and cardinals feed in shrubs, and chickadees, titmice, and woodpeckers feed in trees. To avoid crowding and to attract the greatest variety of species, provide table-like feeders for ground-feeding birds, hopper or tube feeders for shrub and treetop feeders, and suet feeders for woodpeckers, nuthatches, and chickadees.

**Only provide suet during cool weather.** In hot weather, it will turn rancid. Suet attracts insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Place the suet in special feeders at least five feet from the ground to keep it out of the reach of dogs.

**Seed Storage:** Store seed in metal garbage cans or other metal containers that have secure lids to protect it from squirrels and mice. Keep the cans in a cool, dry location; avoid storing in the heat. Damp seeds may grow mold that can be fatal to birds and overheating can destroy the nutrition and taste of sunflower seeds. For these reasons, it's best not to keep seed from one winter to the next.

**Birdbaths:** Traditional concrete birdbaths make nice lawn ornaments but they aren't the best type for birds. The best birdbaths mimic nature's puddles and shallow pools of water in slow streams. You can make your own birdbath using a trashcan lid, saucer-type snow sleds, shallow pan, or old frying pan. Be sure to place it in the shade. Arrange a few stones or branches in the water so birds can stand them while drinking without getting wet. If at all possible, provide dripping water. You can make your own by recycling an old bucket or plastic container. Punch a tiny hole in the bottom, fill it with water, and hang it above the birdbath so the water drips into the bath. Birds will find it irresistible!

**If at all possible, please feed the birds all year!**



Baltimore Oriole. Photo by Monique van den Berg.



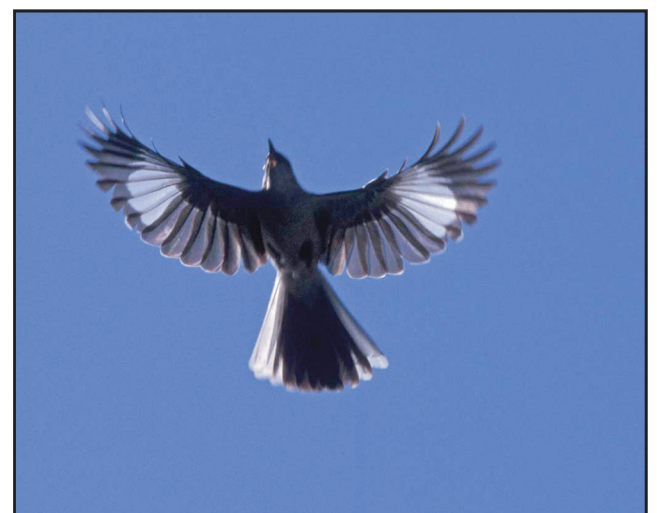
American Robin nest. Photo by Robert Palmer.



American Goldfinch. Photo by Roger Shamley.



Cedar Waxwing. Photo by Laure W. Neish.



Northern Mockingbird. Photo by Ronald M. Saldino.



American Robin. Photo by R. Loznak.

**A**nd about those American Robins! — It's true that they love earthworms and we often see them pulling one out of the ground. But that's definitely not all they eat! They are also great lovers of fruit and berries, especially in fall and winter—chokecherries, hawthorn, dogwood, sumac fruits, and juniper berries—also insects—and even an occasional snail or two! If you put out raisins and currants, you might find them eating those as well—just be sure to soak raisins and currants overnight in water first—that's really important for all the birds.

Robins have even been seen pecking away at a half orange—which probably wasn't allowed to go on very long after the Orioles showed up!



American Robin nest. Photo courtesy of squidoo.com



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](http://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 or renew your existing membership, please fill out the form to the right and send it to our office, or you may join online at our website ([chicagoaudubon.org](http://chicagoaudubon.org)).

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

**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 "Newsletters" in the top row of tabs 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!



*Osprey Portrait.  
 Photo by Katherine Whittemore.*

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**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](http://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).

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**Minimum yearly membership: \$25. At \$65 or above, new Membership or Membership renewal includes an official Chicago Audubon hat.**

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 Card number Expiration date

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

**Calendar of Events July/August 2015**

**Birdwalks, Workdays, Programs**

**ALL YEAR, EVERY SATURDAY: BIRD WALKS WOODED ISLAND IN JACKSON PARK, 8:00 a.m.**  
 These wonderful walks continue throughout the year, weather permitting. 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](mailto:pat.durkin@comcast.net).*

**EVERY SECOND SATURDAY – MONTHLY ALL YEAR: 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.*

**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!



Goldfinches at birdfeeder. Photo courtesy [backyardbirding.com](http://backyardbirding.com)



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