



COMPASS

Navigating the world of birds and nature

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 7

JULY/AUGUST 2001

Budbirders WIN Dr. William Beecher Cup Competition

By Jill Anderson and Walter Marcisz

What a difference a year makes! The second year of the Dr. William Beecher Cup Competition brought many changes for our Birdathon team. The saddest change was the death of our team leader, Bud Wyman, in January, 2001. Bud had been our team's inspiration (and chauffeur) last year. Bud loved birding, Big Days, bad jokes, and good friends. As a tribute to him, we renamed our team the *BudBirders*, raised more money (top fundraiser: Cynthia), and won the trophy.

We think Bud would have been pleased with our efforts, including the final tally of 133 species, which surpassed the official CAS team's results by eleven. We based our strategy revisions on last year's second-place experience. There was nothing to be done about the weather (though it was reassuring to know that a second year of gale-force winds was unlikely), so we focused on team recruitment. Cary Hillemonds, Cynthia Werner and Ken Wysocki joined BudBirders to create a fun and multi-talented team of five.

The date of our Big Day was predetermined by the fact that access to the Sanitation Plant is limited to Sundays. We knew, as did our competitors, that it would be difficult to find sufficient shorebird species without the Calumet Sludge Pits. So May 20 was THE DAY chosen by ALL teams. The renovation at Montrose prompted strategic change. As this was our year for changes, chief strategist (WM) proposed a complete route reversal: Instead of starting in the far NE corner of Cook County (Botanic Garden) why not start in the far SW corner? (The fact that this was closer to his home was irrelevant to strategy.)

The following is a synopsis of the BudBirder's 2001 Birdathon:

1) CA-CHING!: Apart from one panicked moment when we belatedly worried that Duffy Grasslands might not be within Cook County (it is), there was no second-guessing our decision to start in Palos. Every site we visited was excellent for birding. The southsiders began owling before dawn, while the northsiders commuted to Duffy. The birds were cooperative, and Cary impressed the rest of the team with his long-distance hearing and "caller ID". We left the area with almost 3/4 of our total species list (96) and one less TalkAbout by mid morning.

2) LISTEN TO THE MOCKING-BIRD: We met the CAS team in a Skokie cemetery – an unlikely place, but we all read the same "rare" bird

report on IBET. Both teams furtively tallied additional species, and it wasn't until later that we learned both teams had "secretly" and smugly recorded the same birds!

3) BIRDING IS A BEACH: We continued down the Lakefront, stopping at Gilson Park (4 species), Northwestern Landfill (Caspian tern), Montrose (w. thr. sparrow, Cape May warbler, blk thr. blue w., redstart, and kestrel) Addison Bird Sanctuary and Wooded Isle. There were people and cars everywhere, doing everything but birding. The female mud wrestlers were particularly distracting for one

team member. There was no legal parking at Gilson, questionably legal parking at Northwestern, limited parking at Montrose, and a traffic nightmare at Addison. The slow-moving parade to the far southern tip of the Addison parking lot yielded grey-

cheeked and swainson's thrushes at the far end, but the walk back to the Sanctuary yielded nothing. The time spent getting in and out of the parking area put us behind schedule. We canvassed Wooded Isle during the slow part of the afternoon, and only recorded 2 new species (green heron and monk parakeet).

4) STEEPLE CHASE: The peregrine was right where it should have been, nesting high on a church steeple in Hyde Park. Our problem was remembering where the church was! So we chased steeples until we found the one that looked "right".

5) FRIES WITH THAT?: The KFC laughing gull was present and eating "chum" when we arrived. We regained time and saved "bread" with an easy drive-by shoo-ing.

6) IT'S THE PITS: Upon entering the sewage treatment facility, the guard asked if we were there for the sharp-tailed sandpiper. The question re-energized the whole team, even though we never found the bird. We tallied 9 species of shorebirds, bl. winged teal and sedge wren. Remembering our team's experience there last year, we made sure to check every pit before leaving.

7) WALLY'S WORLD: All the birds in Calumet know Walter, and most cooperated for him as he gave his tour. This included the little blue herons at Burnham Prairie, the yellow headed blackbirds and sora at Hegewisch Marsh, virginia rail at Indian Ridge, and fledgling mute swans at Deadstick Pond. An auspicious sign was when

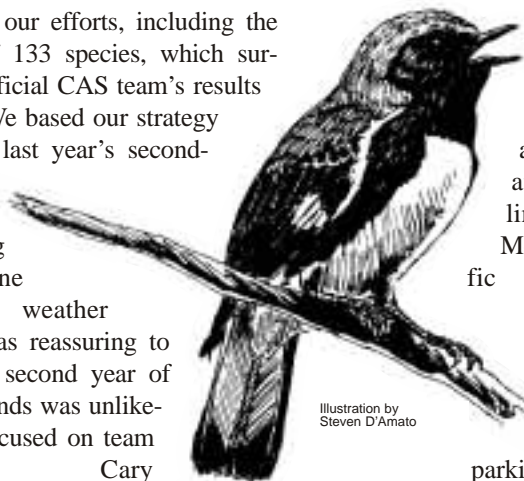


Illustration by Steven D'Amato

BIRDATHON! 2001

Species List

Illustrations by Kristen Munsen

pied-billed grebe	common nighthawk	blue-winged warbler
double crested cormorant	chimney swift	Tennessee warbler
great blue heron	ruby-throated hummingbird	Nashville warbler
great egret	belted kingfisher	yellow warbler
little blue heron	red-headed woodpecker	chestnut-sided warbler
green heron	red-bellied woodpecker	magnolia warbler
black-crowned night heron	downy woodpecker	Cape May warbler
mute swan	hairy woodpecker	black-throated blue warbler
Canada goose	Northern flicker	yellow-rumped warbler
wood duck	Eastern wood peewee	blackburnian warbler
black duck	willow flycatcher	bay-breasted warbler
mallard	least flycatcher	blackpoll warbler
blue-winged teal	phoebe	redstart
northern shoveler	great-crested flycatcher	ovenbird
ruddy duck	eastern kingbird	Connecticut warbler
turkey vulture	purple martin	mourning warbler
osprey	tree swallow	common yellowthroat
red-tailed hawk	rough-winged swallow	Wilson's warbler
kestrel	bank swallow	Canada warbler
peregrine falcon	cliff swallow	yellow-breasted chat
ring-necked pheasant	barn swallow	scarlet tanager
Virginia rail	blue jay	cardinal
sora	crow	rose-breasted grosbeak
American coot	black-capped chickadee	indigo bunting
semipalmated plover	tufted titmouse	rufous-sided towhee
killdeer	white-breasted nuthatch	chipping sparrow
greater yellowlegs	Carolina wren	field sparrow
lesser yellowlegs	house wren	savannah sparrow
solitary sandpiper	sedge wren	Henslow's sparrow
spotted sandpiper	marsh wren	song sparrow
semipalmated sandpiper	blue-grey gnatcatcher	white-throated sparrow
least sandpiper	eastern bluebird	white-crowned sparrow
white-rumped sandpiper	grey-cheeked thrush	bobolink
dunlin	Swainson's thrush	red-winged blackbird
short-billed dowitcher	wood thrush	eastern meadowlark
laughing gull	robin	yellow-headed blackbird
ring-billed gull	catbird	common grackle
herring gull	northern mockingbird	brown-headed cowbird
Caspian tern	brown thrasher	orchard oriole
Forster's tern	cedar waxwing	Baltimore oriole
rock dove	starling	house finch
mourning dove	solitary vireo (blue-headed)	American goldfinch
monk parakeet	yellow-throated vireo	house sparrow
eastern screech owl	warbling vireo	
great horned owl	red-eyed vireo	Total species = 133

Cynthia found a belted kingfisher. We had been looking diligently for this all day as it was Bud's favorite Birdathon bird and, thus, our unofficial team mascot.

8) DOG DAY AFTERNOON: Our luck waned as the day drew to a close. It was far too late to rouse our "guaranteed" swamp sparrow by the time we got to Powderhorn Marsh. Ken knew right where to find hooded mergansers (116th Street), however, although it required "driving the gauntlet" on a dead end road guarded by "MAD DOGS". Our slow drive through the snarling, snapping pack required steady nerves and (according to Ken) a low-riding vehicle. Views of the mergansers were blocked by the presence of a long, idling freight train. We made a fast break for the car and edged past the

ready and waiting mad dogs, without adding any species to the list.

9) LOOK! UP IN THE SKY!: Our far from impressive ending to the day occurred at the heron rookery at sunset. We tried in vain for a snowy egret, hollering out a series of "false alarms" to each other. There was more hollering and hoopla when two night herons flew over. But, after 15 hours of birding, we could only conclude that black-crowned and yellow-crowned night herons look very much the same. Without team consensus, we left our tally at 133 species and went home.

We dutifully returned to our "other lives" early the next morning. Recovery took longer. As of this writing, the authors remain satisfied with route strategy, but may "strategize" vacation for the day after Birdathon! next year.

Local Victory: New Shorebird Protection Area at Montrose Beach

By Jim Landing

Ever since fall of 1979, when an exceptionally large accumulation of seaweed on the east end of Montrose beach attracted a plethora of shorebirds, birders have discussed the possibility of a fenced protection area at this location. In that unusual year, a total of 19 species of shorebirds were recorded, including a breeding plumaged purple sandpiper.

Subsequent years brought unusually high water levels, which reduced the beach area and the birds seen there. But recently, water levels have dropped and natural dunes have formed again,

increasing the beach area, numbers of shorebirds, and talk about protecting them.

In the spring of this year, a proposal was submitted to the Chicago Park District for just that purpose. Under the leadership of the newly created Department of Natural Resources, the reply was positive, and on April 9, they announced that a 400' x 60' no admittance area would be established along the lake adjacent to the breakwater at the east end of Montrose Beach.

For the first time in 65 years (the age of Montrose Beach), shorebirds will be able to occupy 24,000 square feet free of disturbance from joggers, swimmers,

boaters and dogs. Viewing areas will now be accessible to those wishing to sit and birdwatch. Located adjacent to the breakwater, the long abandoned "shorebird watches" will return this year under the sponsorship of the Conservation Committee of the Chicago Audubon Society.

On May 16, a group of non-game specialists met and worked out the monitoring program for this area, and the Chicago Park District is going to release funds to handle its costs. This is an historic development, as most park districts seek to increase, not decrease, four-legged activity within their borders.

The Park District is to be commended for their commitment to wildlife as evidenced by planting improvements at Wooded Island, Montrose Point, Addison Street Bird Sanctuary, Lincoln Park Bird Sanctuary (to benefit birds and birders), an observation deck at the Lincoln Park sanctuary, and numerous conifer plantings along the lakefront to provide roosting-resting sites for owls. A proposed boardwalk and observation deck around a dune wetland and butterfly meadow are now in the offing for the South Shore Cultural Center as well.

Shorebird migration in Chicago begins around June 15. So come out and enjoy some of our newly protected birding areas.



Peregrine Update

Chicago and beyond

By Mary Hennen

Here is a brief summary of what's been happening to date with Chicago's peregrine pairs:

- 125 South Wacker—Dory & Jingles parents, 5 eggs, 5 hatched, 5 young banded on June 5th (4 males, 1 female).
- 5821 N. Broadway — Eleanor & Franklin, new ledge, at least 2 eggs laid, 2 young visible.
- Hyde Park — Orion & Magnolia, 3 eggs laid, 0 hatched, nest failed with no renest.
- Prison Birds—Adults banded, at least 4 eggs laid, 4 hatched and fledged. One male landed on the ground, was retrieved and taken to Lincoln Park Zoo. Bird was fine. Banded and released on June 14th.
- UIC—Adult female is Rosie, male banded. First nest failed. Renested with 4 eggs which began hatching during the first week in June with 4 chicks visible by June 8th. Banding is scheduled for the end of the month.
- River Birds — Oog and Fast Eddy. Laid 2 eggs and nest failed in April. No attempt to renest.
- Evanston — Adult male is Tracey, no reconfirmation of female. Laid 4 eggs on new ledge. Nest failed in May, no attempt to renest observed.
- Uptown — Adult male is unband-ed, female is Minnie. 3 eggs laid and all

hatched. Banding is scheduled for end of June.

PEREGRINES THREATENED IN WESTERN U.S.

A court in Utah ruled that the Division of Natural Resources had no right to close the peregrine season to falconers, and issued a dozen permits allowing falconers to pluck chicks from their nests. There is fear that peregrines may be over-harvested from the few nests in northern Utah, where they are scant.

New Mexico environmental groups are threatening to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to monitor the peregrine population. The New Mexico Environmental Service Agency (ESA) required monitoring for 5 years after the controversial 1999 de-listing, but ESA failed to begin the survey work this spring, as promised. USFWS instead authorized falconers to take up to 5% of nestlings in all the Western states, despite the fact that they do not have up-to-date accurate population information.

(Taken from GREENlines, June 25, 2001.)



Illustration by Steven D'Amato

COMPASS

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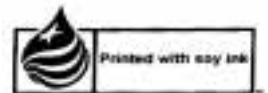
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Spring Count Highlights for Cook County

By Duane Heaton

In the 30th annual statewide Spring Bird Count, Cook County's 119 participants mentioned what seemed like low numbers of birds. But when all reports came in, it was a fairly "average" year.

The 187 species reported were in line with the ten-year average of 188 species and the 30-year average of 184 species. The number of individual birds was also about average.

Highlights of the count included a first-ever Swainson's hawk, and 30-year highs for bald eagle (2), peregrine falcon (9), hairy woodpecker (44), and sedge wren (14). Highs and ties for the last ten years were reported for the least bittern (1), osprey (7), king rail (1), horned lark (3), and Harris' sparrow (1). A laughing gull hybrid was also reported.

For the first time in 30 years, there were no sharp-shinned hawks or purple finches, and purple martins (27) were the

lowest ever reported. Missed for the first time in ten years were northern harrier, semipalmated plover, barred owl, and dark-eyed junco. Other ten-year lows and ties were recorded for pied-billed grebe (16), blue-winged teal (31), Bonaparte's gull (2), yellow-throated vireo (2), and yellow-headed blackbird (8).

Other spring count facts:

- 397 party miles driven
- 4:00 am—earliest birding time
- 10:00 pm—latest birding time
- 4:00 am-5:10 am—owling hours
- 8:25 pm-10:00 pm—owling hours
- 3.75 total owling party hours

Look in the September COMPASS for the actual Spring Bird Count results. To view results now, log onto: www.audubon.org/chapter/il/chicago
Thanks to all who participated!

PARTICIPANTS: Kim Ainis, Chris Anchor, Alan Anderson, Jill Anderson,

Mary Alice Anderson, David Baker, Margaret Baker, John Bates, Robert Bezouska, Alan Birkner, Tadas Birutis, Dave Brooks, Toby Brown, Joan Bruchman, Colin Bull, Fairbank Carpenter, Lynne Carpenter, Scott Carpenter, Karin Cassel, Carol Chaudin, Paul R. Clyne, Frank Dani, Michael Dani, Don Darnell, Vicki Deckert, Eleonara DiLiscia, Randi Doeker, Rose Duke, Lynn Eikenbary, Scott Ellwood, Allen Feldman, Carol Fialkowski, Conrad Fialkowski, Sue Friscia, Jerry Garden, Karon Graf, Dave Gruver, Gary Gulezian, Carol Haddon, Duane Heaton, Mary Hennen, Caroline Herzenberg, Leonardo Herzenberg, Becky Hutton, Dorothy Jackson, Doris Johanson, Robert Johanson, Liz Johnson, Steve Kelso, Michelle Kern, Scott L. King, Don Klimovich, Ron Klingensmith, John Koch, Barbara Kratochvil, Walter Krawiec, Tom Kreilling, Sandy Kroll, Karl Laegeler, Debbie Lamoureux, Jim Landing, Christine Lee, Stephen Lee,

Ruth Lempert, John Leonard, Mike Levin, Dave Lin, Michael Lisec, Eric Lundquist, Mary Ann Mahoney, Walter Marcisz, Carolyn Marsh, Dennis Marten, Linda Marten, Vivian McDermott, Judy Mellin, Alex Meloy, Margo Merrick, Nancy Merrill, Ruth Milgrom, Roger Miller, Kosh Monday, Bob Morgan, Jim Nathan, Jill Niland, Ken Oberlander, Bill Peak, Ray Pershing, Judy Pollock, Jennette Rader, Carol Ramsey, Lee Ramsey, Mary Rice, Sue Roberts, Terry Schilling, Sigrid Schmidt, Tom Schulenberg, Wes Serafin, Dave Sherer, Mike Sherer, Mark Spreyer, John Staudinger, Stan Stec, Carol S. Strand, Paul M. Strand, Tony Szabados, Barb Thayer, Craig Thayer, Carol Thomas, Jeff Thomas, John Viramontes, David Wachtel, Rick Wachtel, Elaine Wall, Eric Walters, Geoff Williamson, Karen Zipser.

THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR HELP!

Chicago Audubon's 13th Annual Owl Census

By Christine Lee
CAS President

Every year, the weather plays an important role in the owl count. Owls seem to be sensitive to changing weather conditions—they seem not to like unsettled weather or windy conditions.

This dislike of windy weather also applies to census participants—it is difficult to hear owls when the wind is howling.

This year, the weather on Saturday, March 3 was calm and not too cold. However, on Saturday evening the wind picked up, and Sunday, March 4 was overcast and windy.

Our participants rose to the challenge anyway. We had a record number of great-horned owls, even if our screech owl count was down. A few areas covered in previous years were not covered this year, and that might be the reason the total count was lower than in years past.

For the first time in many years, the Southwest Side (Palos primarily) had a substantial number of screech owls as well as great-horned owls. From Lake Calumet, Walter Marcisz reported a great-horned nest with two fledglings. Ken Wysocki covered the traditionally fruitful Plum Grove and Bartel grasslands for barred and long-eared owls, but couldn't find any at all.

In the western suburbs, Bob Bezouska reported

that screech owls were quiet but very aggressive. His report matched ours from Thatcher and Bemis Woods. The screech owls in Thatcher Woods were very quiet, and answered our calls only once or twice. At Bemis Woods, they were quiet between 3:00-5:00 a.m. but woke up after 5:00. We crossed to the north side of the woods, the wind died down, and they became very vocal, flying around us. At one point, one of them dive-bombed Stephen (and his tape recorder). Too close to the nest, I guess. This has happened to Stephen before. We moved away so as not to further upset the owl, and met with more success in the north-west area of Bemis as well.

Randy Wade reported six great-horned and 12 screech owls in Deer Grove, as well as a (bonus) coyote. At Paul Douglas Preserve, Stan Stec and his group found a great-horned nest with male and female on the nest, and also a very cooperative saw-whet owl.

We'd like to THANK all those who participated in this year's 13th annual owl count. Those of you who had only a few or no owls, please try again next year!

THANKS AGAIN TO all the 2001 owl counters: Alan Anderson, Keith Bernhardt, Liz Bernhardt, Bob Bezouska, Barb Birmingham, George Birmingham, Valerie Byrne, Charles Copple, Glen Dawson, Vicki Deckert, Renata Denton, Kelly Dougherty, Christine K. Dougherty, Jim Ewald, Sarah Ewald, Carol Fialkowski, Conrad Fialkowski, Carolyn Fields, Sally Gamble, Tim Gamble, Cheri Gearhart, Ann Goh, Sally Hajek, Ralph Herbst, Pat Jean, Roger Keller, Linda Klingensmith, Max Klingensmith, Ron Klingensmith, Christine Lee, Stephen Lee, Mike Lin, Walter Marcisz, Pat Newman, Tim Paluck, Kathryn Pingry, Brian Rambeax, Jeff Sanders, Don Sands, Mei Sands, Wes Serafin, Stan Stec, Mike Steffen, Rick Steffen, John Vallano, Randall Wade, Eric Walters, Ken Wysocki.

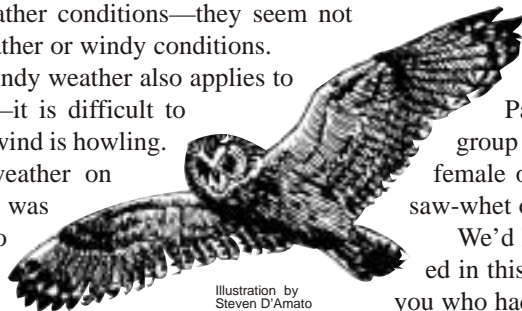


Illustration by Steven D'Amato



Illustration by Steven D'Amato

March 2 - 4, 2001 OWL CENSUS

GREAT HORNED	South & Southwest	North & Northwest	West
Heard	3	3	5
Seen	4	5	0
Heard & Seen	12	1	0
TOTAL	19	9	5
TOTAL # GREAT HORNED OWLS: 33 (includes 2 nests)			

SCREECH	South & Southwest	North & Northwest	West
Heard	5	0	4
Seen	6	9	11
Heard & Seen	3	4	6
TOTAL	14	13	12
TOTAL # SCREECH OWLS: 39			

SAW-WHET OWLS: 1 seen in Paul Douglas Preserve

Aviary

City Denizens

Blocks rowdy with jays and strumpet sparrows,
Puddle-dipping between double-parked trucks.
Pigeons, like seedy matrons, waddle cheek by
jowl
With bag ladies and coo, coo, coo.

At the Place of Black Water and Bad Air

On rancid air gulls tilt, jeer, "Mine, all mine."
Near the landfill, thrashers scratch in dark lanes,
Scout for worms around illicit cars.
On shabby acres, gaunt men chitchat
With juncoes, hobnob with chickadees.

Above the Park, Near the Top of the Food Chain

The fast hawks razor the greenery,
Patrol for the slow, the careless. If we
Looked up from our chardonnay, we might
See one ripping the heart from a warbler.

In the Outskirts

Crow sidles, glossy as a maitre d',
An undertaker, a full professor,
His voice is rich with scorn. Shrewd as any
Ungainly country lawyer, he pretends
To know his place, flaps back to his creek, where
Cottonwoods lift white limbs in surrender.

In the Night Fields, Closer Than You Think

Cornstalks rasp brittle music. Wind shivers
Over furrows, deep weeds. Pausing to scratch,
The mouse knows the sinking talons before
The sudden, rushing brush of the owl's pinions.

Morning: Full Spring, the Suburbs

Walk into a jubilee, a glee of wings.
Songs rising, spilling through the mist,
Saying to this little place, I belong.
Trill, trill the sun across the lawns,
Shimmering, day, day, day! Day anointed
In pure song, in pure song, in pure, pure song.

by Mark Defoe

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Member Programs

Friday, September 14—An Evening with Audubon: Hawks in Flight

Join expert Vic Berardi who will teach us how to identify hawks in flight using slides and handouts. Timed to coincide with the beginning of the peak season for hawk watching, Vic will also cover what weather conditions are conducive to seeing hawks.

Programs are held at 7:30 p.m. at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski. No pre-registration is required. Refreshments are served at 7:00 p.m.

Monthly Workdays

Skokie Lagoons

Chicago Audubon Society conducts regular monthly workdays at the Skokie Lagoons on the second Saturday of every month. Summer and fall workdays will focus planting, brush clearing, and animal and on plant monitoring.

Upcoming workdays are Saturday, August 11 and September 8.

Meet at the Tower Road parking lot (east of the bridge). If you arrive late, look for a CAS sign near the parking lot directing you to the work site. For more information, call Jerry Garden at (773) 545-4632.

Weekly Bird Walks

Every Wednesday in July & August at 7:00 a.m. at Wooded Island

Meet at the Darrow Bridge just south of the Museum of Science and Industry. Your guide is Doug Anderson (773) 493-7058.

Every Saturday in July & August at 8:00 a.m. at Wooded Island

See above.

Field Trips

Saturday, July 21 at 12:00 Noon. Wildflowers at Midewin Tall Grass Prairie.

At last, a trip for all you late risers! We will meet at Midewin Tall Grass Prairie to go on one of their guided tours (you still cannot access most of the area on your own). The emphasis this trip will be on wildflowers and grasses of the prairie. Many flowers should be coming into full bloom. Bring your binoculars as there will still be birds (and butterflies) around.

Midewin is the site of the old Joliet Army Ammunition Plant. Take the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) south

from the city. Exit at Wilmington (#241), turn east (left) and go 5-7 miles to the end. Then turn left on Highway 53 (north) and go 1/4 mile.

The Administration building is a red brick building on the east side of the road. We will meet here at 12:00 noon. The tour will start promptly at 12:30 p.m., and there will be no late admittance. There is a \$2.00 fee/person for this payable in cash to Midewin at the start of the trip. There is a limit of 20 people, so pre-registration is necessary.

To register call Stephen or Christine Lee at (708) 485-8197 or email at stephenc@interaccess.com.

Sunday, August 26 at 8:00 a.m. Lake Calumet Shorebirds.

Walter Marcisz, the expert on the Lake Calumet area, will be leading the hunt for shore birds. Likely birds to be seen include little blue heron, snowy egret, yellow-crowned night heron, yellowlegs, dowitchers and sandpipers.

Meet at 8 a.m. at O'Brien Lock & Dam. To get to O'Brien Lock & Dam take I-94 south from the city. Take 130th St. and exit east. Turn right just before the steel bridge into O'Brien Lock & Dam. This trip is co-sponsored with the Chicago Ornithological Society.

For further information contact Walter Marcisz at (773) 646-3034.

Saturday, September 1 at 8:00 a.m. Lake County's Middlefork Savannah

Come enjoy the beauty of this savannah, which includes grassland, wetland and wooded habitats and the birds within.

To get to Middlefork, take either I-94 or Rte. 41 to Rte. 60 in Lake Forest. Go to Waukegan Road, approximately 7 mile west of Rte. 41. Go north on Waukegan Rd. to the second stoplight, and make a left on Middlefork Drive. Follow the road west, around a brief circle and down a short hill, to the public parking lot. We'll meet in the lot.

Please contact Jeff Sundberg at (847) 680-3669 or jsundberg@hermes.lfc.edu with questions, or to inquire about carpooling arrangements.

Other Events

Save the date!
Birding America V
will be on March 2, 2002.
Mark your calendars now.

The 9th annual Alaska Bird Conference will be held March 6-8, 2002 in Fairbanks, Alaska. All inquiries should be sent to Nancy Dewitt at the Alaska Bird Observatory (ndewitt@alaskabird.org)

The webpage for the observatory is www.alaskabird.org

Peregrine Falcon, New York City

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On the sixty-fifth floor where you wrote advertising copy, joking about the erotic thrall of words that had no purpose other than to seduce far too many into buying far too much, you stood one afternoon face to face with a falcon

that veered on the blade of its wings and plummeted, tracing the wind's unseen flight paths. An office of computers

clicked behind you. Below, the silence of the miniature lunchtime crowds hurrying one way or another,

and toylike taxis drifting without resolve to the will of others. This falcon's been brought in, you thought of joking, to clean up the city's dirty problem of too many pigeons. It's a hired beak. But the falcon had gotten to you—

the way it gave itself with such purpose to the air that carried it, its sheer falls breaking the mirrored self-reflections of glass office towers. As if you alone were meant to see it, you remained at the smoked-glass windows, time

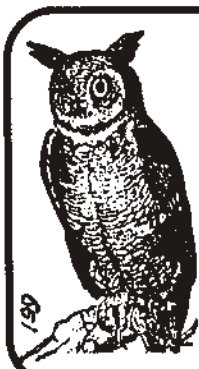
suspended as the bird rolled and plunged, then swerved to a halt, wings hovering. You chided yourself: this is how the gods come to deliver a message or a taunt, and, for a moment, the falcon seemed to wait

for your response. Then it was gone.

And though the thin edge of the falcon's wings had opened the slightest fissure in you and you'd wandered far in thought, you already felt yourself turning back to words for an ad, the falcon's power surely a fit emblem for something.

by Robert Cording

Taken from—Urban Nature: Poems about Wildlife in the City, Edited by Laure-Anne Bosselaar, Published 2000 by Milkweed Editions.



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