



# COMPASS

*Navigating the world of birds and nature*

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 10

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002

## Introducing — John James Audubon



Courtesy of National Audubon Society

By Don Darnell  
CAS Board Member

*“Today I saw the swiftest skater I ever beheld; backwards and forwards he went like the wind, even leaping over large air holes fifteen or more*

*feet across, and continuing to skate without an instant's delay. I was told he was a young Frenchman, and this evening I met him at a ball, where I found his dancing exceeded his skating; all the ladies wished him as partner; moreover a handsomer man I never saw, his eyes alone command attention; his name, Audubon, is strange to me.”*

— David Pawling, Mill Grove, PA;  
January, 1805, on 19-year-old John J. Audubon

John James Audubon has carried a lot of tags over the years – backwoodsman, adventurer, portrait and wildlife artist, author, bird-lover, naturalist, conservationist – and “strange” (beyond the name) could very well have been one of them: as strange as any artist on a mission, now or then. So perhaps it would be best to think of

our John J today simply as a nature-loving artist who gave the world its first life-size look at *The Birds of America*, doing so in the form of full-scale colorized drawings, over four-hundred of them, published in England between 1827 and 1838. (What better place to sell the birds of the New World?)

Without becoming overly maudlin, you could say that John J was a magical human being, the kind of person with a discernable glint in his eye, a kind of spiritual force one sensed might do something noteworthy in the big scheme of things, honorably so. By many accounts our namesake was handsome, quietly charismatic, generous to a fault, compassionate, sensitive, quick-tempered, intelligent, and athletic. He was also a loving family

continued on page 2

### Audubon's Life — A Chronology

- 1785**—John James Audubon born in Santo Domingo (now Haiti)
- 1788**—Sent to France to be educated by his father's family
- 1803**—Arrived in Pennsylvania to manage his father's land
- 1805**—Returned briefly to France
- 1806**—Settled permanently in the United States
- 1808**—Married Lucy Bakewell and moved to Kentucky
- 1820-24**—Employed as a taxidermist, portrait painter, and drawing teacher in Ohio and Louisiana while preparing his watercolors of North American birds
- 1826**—Sailed for England to seek support for his publication
- 1827**—Began publication of *The Birds of America* in England as large folio of engravings, completed in 1838
- 1840**—Began publication of smaller octavo edition in the U. S., including both plates and text
- 1843**—Traveled up the Missouri River, sketching for quadrupeds project
- 1845**—Published the first volume on mammals, *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, completed by Audubon's sons, John Woodhouse and Victor, with John Bachman
- 1848**—In declining health
- 1851**—Audubon died at his home near New York City

### ADD VALUE TO YOUR NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP JOIN CHICAGO AUDUBON TODAY!

The National Audubon Society (NAS) has changed its relationship with national chapters. The portion of membership dues distributed to chapters like Chicago Audubon will be substantially reduced in coming years.

To sustain Chicago Audubon, Chicago members must join the local chapter in order to support Chicago programs, field trips, bird walks and educational events.

National has already reduced the number of magazines to four issues a year. By continuing to support National, you will receive the magazine and two issues of The COMPASS: one with a yearly calendar and one with a bird seed sale order form.

To continue supporting both your local and national chapters, and to receive all ten

issues of The COMPASS, we ask that you join Chicago Audubon Society for \$20 a year.\*

This coming year, you will continue to receive The COMPASS. But after 2003, you will only receive all ten issues, news about local birds, and local birding and conservation issues if you are a member of Chicago Audubon.

We encourage you to join now. Send in the membership form below, or call the office (773/539-6793) and pay with a credit card. Thank you for your continued support.

— Al Rothenbach, Membership Chair

\* You do not have to be a member of National Audubon to join the Chicago chapter.

:::REMINDER:::  
:::REMINDER:::

The 103rd Christmas Bird Counts are coming up on December 14 through January 4.

See Page Four for details.

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## Join Chicago Audubon Society Today!



The Chicago Audubon Society (CAS) is a leader in the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Established in 1971, CAS operates as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with over 4,000 members in the Chicago area. CAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society with 600,000 members nationwide.

### MEMBER ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS:

- Monthly member meetings
- Bird Walks led by trained guides
- Bird Habitat Survey
- Christmas Bird Count
- Center for New Birders (2003)
- Field trips year round
- Biennial Birding America Conference
- Birdathon
- Student Scholarship Awards
- The COMPASS (10 per year)

**TO JOIN:** Complete the application form below and mail it with your check (payable to “Chicago Audubon Society”) to:

Chicago Audubon Society  
5801-C North Pulaski Road  
Chicago, IL 60646-6057

Or by Phone: (773) 539-6793 with a VISA or MASTERCARD

### CHICAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a member of the Chicago Audubon Society. Enclosed is my check for \$20.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# ON THEIR WAY!

## SECOND FLOCK OF WHOOPERS HEADS TO FLORIDA

By Gail Goldberger

Seventeen young whoopers began their ultralight-led migration from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge to Chassahowitzka N.W.R. on October 13th. Due to unseasonably cold, wet and windy weather, it took them 13 days to make it out of Wisconsin.

This year, four ultralights are flying the flock to Florida. One crane was injured on the first day when unstable wind conditions caused it to come into contact with the wing of the lead aircraft. Despite medical intervention, the crane did not regain enough mobility to continue the flight. As of November 4th, the flock of 16 had flown 335.5 miles, spending the night in Boone County, Indiana.

Last year, out of the first flock of eight whoopers flown out of Wisconsin, seven made it to Florida. One was lost when it collided with a power line. Of the seven who wintered in Florida, two were lost to bobcat predation, and five made it back to Wisconsin in the spring.

This year's is the second of five planned ultralight-led migrations, designed to establish a migratory flock of at least 25 breeding pairs in the Eastern United States. Only one other migratory flock survives in the States—consisting of about 175 birds that shuttle between Aransas Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf of Mexico in Texas and Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada's Northwest Territories.



Kirsten Munson

## AUDUBON

Continued from Page 1

man and a soul-of-the-earth socializer who made a point of greeting any passing stranger with a friendly "Well my good [man], how do you do today?" a social gesture growing less common by the hour (although in this century you might find yourself on the receiving end of such a salutation, sincerely meant, at Montrose Point or the Bill Jarvis Bird Sanctuary, if Chicago's venerable birdman Jim Landing is out and about).

Of course, John J had his faults. As already mentioned he could have a temper, and, if we can believe his journals, like many driven individuals he was often a self-deprecating workaholic given to minor bouts of depression. As to his greatest enjoyment in life -- outside of his wife, Lucy, and his children -- it was simply taking an early-morning walk through the woods of America while listening to and watching nature, (mostly along the banks of the Ohio.)

And to John J, nature meant birds more than any other one thing. Some of the birds he came across he named, and all of them, thankfully, he drew. Of course, naysayers will remind us that our hero had to shoot his birds before sketching them, or have someone else "procure" specimens for him. But we'll just have to forgive John on that count; after all, he didn't have the luxury of the ubiquitous glass building providing him dozens of migratory specimens per diem; and, of course, Swarovski lenses weren't available in 1819 America, at least not in Kentucky.

By his own account, John J Audubon claimed he was "overrated," that all his efforts at "copying nature" were "nothing but primitiveness." And he never claimed to be an ornithologist or scientist of any stripe, or writer or scholar for that matter -- although his



Courtesy of National Audubon Society

## John James Audubon

collaboration with MacGillivray on the ornithological text to his published drawings was nothing to sneeze at. But by the sheer weight of his perseverance at marketing his drawings, to this day his name is still the first to come to mind whenever we associate a human being with birds, or to so many of us, conservation in general: ala, The Audubon Society.

So we thought it might be a good idea to share bits and pieces of John J with our readers by periodically printing excerpts from his journals as well as quotes from those who knew him. We're hoping these occasional peeks at our benefactor's extraordinary life might pique some of our membership to visit the local library or bookstore and read his journals for themselves, get a sense of this rare American bird's

"jizz" (the way we serious birders pronounce "G.I.S." for a bird's General Impression and Shape). It's fun reading for anyone with the slightest interest in birds, nature in general, or history itself.

Go ahead, pickup a copy of Audubon's European and American Journals and see for yourself what an ahead-of-his-time birder this American backwoodsman with the thick French accent was, how he fretted about the "demise of nature" a century-and-a half before it became fashionable to do so. Our John J wasn't a myth or a society. He was a living, breathing human being. A human being who loved mankind as well as birds. He was, and always will be, our dearly beloved.

## COMPASS

Chicago Audubon Society  
North Park Village  
5801-C N. Pulaski Road  
Chicago, IL 60646-6057



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**Rare bird alert:** (847) 265-2118  
**Activity line:** (773) 539-6793, press 1  
**Web page:**  
[www.homepage.interaccess.com/~stephenc/index.html](http://www.homepage.interaccess.com/~stephenc/index.html)

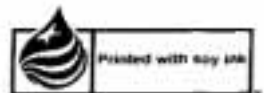
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## IN MEMORIAM



**William J. Beecher**  
**1913 - 2002**

*By Doug Anderson  
CAS Board Member*

William Beecher, former director of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, died on July 27 at the age of 88. He lived a long, productive life filled with many accomplishments. He was an ornithologist, nature photographer, artist, scientist and inventor.

Born and raised in Chicago, Beecher became devoted to the study of birds when a high school teacher assigned him a bird as the subject for a report. He did his report on the red-headed woodpecker, and became a birdman the rest of his life.

In 1937 he became an assistant zoologist at the Field Museum, and remained there until entering the Service in World War II. Whenever he had a chance, he sketched the exotic birds he saw on the South Pacific islands where he was stationed.

Following the war, he received three degrees from the University of Chicago, including doctorates in zoology and ornithology. After three years with the Cook County Forest Preserve District, he was hired as director of the Chicago Academy of Sciences in 1958, and served in that position for the next 25 years.

The Academy was Chicago's oldest natural history museum and had remained rather dormant for many years before Beecher got there. He proceeded to restore and expand the famous dioramas on the second floor that depicted natural scenes of the Chicago area as they appeared 200 years ago. With the help of staff and friends like Karl Bartel, who provided many photos and advice on how best to position the stuffed birds and other animals in each exhibit, the dioramas took on a new life. Being a perfectionist, Beecher would meticulously glue even tiny insects on leaves in the exhibits—something not even attempted at other museums.

His weekly lecture series on nature subjects, especially primatology and paleoanthropology, brought world-famous scientists to the Academy for these free and open lectures. I became a regular at these lectures in the 1970's, and received a greater education there

than at any other time in my life.

Beecher knew how to use the media to publicize important issues. He became aware in the 70's that the Hancock Center's ribbon of bright light near the top was killing many migrating birds. They would be drawn into the light, fly into the building and break their necks. After failed attempts to get the building managers to turn off the lights during the migration season, Beecher collected dozens of dead birds from around the building, laid them out in the Academy's parking lot, and called a press conference. After pictures of the birds showed up in the papers and on TV, the Hancock management turned off the lights, and have continued to do so during every Spring and Fall migration since then.

When Beecher retired from the Academy in 1983, he turned his energies to perfecting a binocular that could be worn like glasses. He set up the Beecher Research Company in Elgin to manufacture his "Mirage" binoculars, and his close friend, Bud Wyman, helped him market the product. It never became popular with bird watchers, but later, was widely used by people seeking to overcome macular degeneration.

Beecher went on a number of Audubon trips around the country organized by Bud Wyman in the 1980's and 90's. I went on most of these trips as well. Beecher always brought loads of camera equipment with him, and would sometimes argue heatedly with security guards at the airport who demanded that he open his camera bags. Somehow, he always made it through the security gate. In his earlier trips he always demanded complete silence from everyone around him when he was observing or filming a bird. He stopped yelling and became a very likable companion in trips in the 1990's. As a zoo docent, I also enjoyed talking with him when I saw him at Lincoln Park Zoo, which was almost every weekend. He always wore his "Mirage" binoculars as he observed the animals.

Bill Beecher was a bachelor throughout his life. He once told a friend that he could be either a great ornithologist or a great father, but never both. He chose ornithology. He was a long-time member of the Chicago Audubon Society and will always be remembered for his vast contributions to the world of birds.



Photos courtesy of Chicago Academy of Sciences Archives.

### NOTICE

Monies raised from the Birdathon three years ago to build an accessible viewing platform for the McGuinness Slough in the Palos area will be redirected to other projects, comparable in nature.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Stewardship Workdays

**At the Skokie Lagoons: November 9 and December 14 at 10:00 a.m.**

Chicago Audubon conducts regular monthly workdays at the Skokie Lagoons on the second Saturday of every month. Activities include buckthorn cutting, animal and plant monitoring, cleanup and debris removal, planting, and other management activities.

Meet at the Tower Road parking lot, east of the lagoon bridge. If you arrive late, look for a CAS sign near the parking lot directing you to the work site.

For further information call Jerry Garden at (773)545-4632, or e-mail him at [jerrygarden@sprynet.com](mailto:jerrygarden@sprynet.com)

## Member Programs

At the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. 7-7:30 p.m. Refreshments 7:30 p.m. Program

## Friday, November 8 Remembering the Prairie

Dubbed the Prairie State, Illinois originally had 22,000,000 miles of prairie. Only one-tenth of one percent remains of this fragrant, flower-filled, grassy landscape the supported Native Americans and the buffalo they hunted. These days, finding prairies to visit is a challenge. Come hear the authors of *Prairie Directory of North America* discuss Illinois prairies. Dr. Evelyn Pease Tyner shows slides of a local, never-plowed 8,000 year-old prairie she helped save from development.

## Field Trips

**Sunday, November 3 at 8:00 a.m.  
Indiana Lakeshore**

We will bird the Indiana shoreline in the Gary area. Birds seen in earlier years include jaegers, black-legged kittiwakes, all three scoters, red-throated loons, red phalarope and Sabines gull.

Our trip leaders are Ken Brock, author of *Birds of the Indiana Dunes*, John Cassaday and Jeff McCoy.

For further details call the Lees at (708) 485-8197 or e-mail [stephenc@interaccess.com](mailto:stephenc@interaccess.com).

## Bird Walks

**Wooded Island  
Wednesdays, November 6, 13, 20  
and 27  
December 4, 11, 18 and 25**

**Saturdays, November 2, 9, 16, 23  
and 30  
December 7, 14, 21 and 28**

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

## Other Events

**Christmas Bird Counts, December 14, 2002 – January 4, 2003 (See below)**

**SAVE THE DATE!  
Eagle Optics Demo Day  
North Park Village Nature Center  
April 12, 2003—9 am - 4 pm**

CAS will host a demonstration day with Eagle Optics. You will be able to try out the newest binoculars and scopes. Experts on hand to answer questions. Five percent of the proceeds will go to CAS and the Center for New Birders. Details to follow.

## 2002 - 2003 NORTHEAST ILLINOIS/NORTHWEST INDIANA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

### Saturday, December 14:

**Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore**—For assignments contact the Coordinator - Judy Gaskell d-(312)362-6893, e- (219) 926-9630; [jgaskell@depaul.edu](mailto:jgaskell@depaul.edu) [Chesterton, In.Dunes National Lakeshore and State Park, western Michigan City, Port of Indiana, Otis north of Rt. 6 to lake] Results compiled by Joy Bower W: Gibson Woods 219/844-3188 Fax: 219/844-1429 H: 219/989-9679 [E-mail:teetrsnipe@aol.com](mailto:E-mail:teetrsnipe@aol.com)

**Fermilab-Batavia**, compiler- Denis Kania (630-961-5364; [melissalkania@lightfirst.com](mailto:melissalkania@lightfirst.com)) [Fermi Lab north to Pratts-Wayne Woods, east to Western Naperville]

### Sunday, December 15:

**Lisle-Morton Arboretum**, compiler - Geoff Williamson (773) 935-8439; [lislecbc@chicagobirder.org](mailto:lislecbc@chicagobirder.org) [Brookfield, Western Springs west to eastern Naperville, Lemont north to Highland Hills; Morton Arboretum, western Palos]

**Chicago Urban**, compiler - Jeff Sanders (847) 657-6431; [yellowstart5@yahoo.com](mailto:yellowstart5@yahoo.com) [Chicago: central area - 39th St. to Touhy; eastern area - west of Lake Shore Dr. from Roosevelt to Pratt; west to Norridge, Stone Park, Bellwood, Forest Park, River Forest]

### Monday, December 16:

**Barrington**, Compiler - Duane Heaton (847) 358-5856 [dheaton@xnet.com](mailto:dheaton@xnet.com) [Hanover Pk. North to Barrington; Rolling Meadows west to Rt. 25/East Dundee; Palatine, Busse Woods, Schaumburg]

### Saturday, December 21:

South Lake County, Indiana; compiler - Barb Dodge (219) 374-4385 (probable date - please call compiler to confirm)

### Wednesday, December 25:

**Chicago Lakefront**, compiler - Joel Greenberg (630) 725-9416 [Chicago lakefront east of Lake Shore Drive - 63rd St. to Montrose - no feeders]

### Saturday, December 28:

**Calumet/Sand Ridge**, compiler - Carolyn Marsh (219) 659-7904; [cmarshbird@prodigy.net](mailto:cmarshbird@prodigy.net) [Lansing, S. Holland, Riverdale, Dolton, Calumet Park, Glenwood, Homewood, IL; Hammond, Whiting, E. Chicago, Gary, Munster, IN]

**Evanston-North Shore**, compiler - Ralph Herbst (708) 867-6660 [geomalia@interaccess.com](mailto:geomalia@interaccess.com) [Evanston north to Lake Forest (Deerpath Rd.); lakefront west to Sioux FP/Palwaukee Airport; Wheeling, Highland Pk., Wilmette]

### Sunday, December 29:

**Thorn Creek/Park Forest**, compiler - Jim Kelly (708) 798-3115; [jkelly959@aol.com](mailto:jkelly959@aol.com) [Frankfort, Homewood, Park Forest, Plum Creek; center of circle is Governor's State University]

### Wednesday, January 1

**Waukegan**, compiler - Joel Greenberg (630) 725-9416 [SE Lake Forest to SW Libertyville; north to Zion nuclear power plant; N. Chicago, Waukegan]

For other Illinois CBC info, please go to the following website: <http://home.xnet.com/~ugeiser/Birds/BirdCounts.html>

Also, for a link to all national CBC's and ALL results, go to [www.birdsource.com](http://www.birdsource.com) (the combined website of National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology).

**A reminder on how to participate:** Call the compiler (or coordinator) in your area for meeting times and places, and area assignments. Some groups get together the evening before, and lodging may be provided.

## BIRD SEED SALE VOLUNTEERS, THANK YOU!

Thanks to the volunteers who helped distribute bird seed on the chilly morning of October 26th. We couldn't have done it without you. In Evanston: Don Darnell, Gail Goldberger, Dennis Johnston, Al Rothenbach and Toni Rothenbach. In River Forest: Carl Auersch, Pam Koziol, Chris Lee, Stephen Lee, Kathleen Radcliffe, Alex Szewczyk and George Szewczyk.

## THISTLE FOR SALE PRICE REDUCED!

Chicago Audubon has thirteen 25-lb bags of thistle for sale, at a deep discount of \$15 per bag. Thistle is the goldfinch's favorite. Stock up now. Call the office to purchase and pick-up. 773-539-6793.