



COMPASS

Navigating the world of birds and nature

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2003

RESERVOIR OF BEAUTY

by Don Darnell

When Allen Siegle and his wife, Phyllis, boarded a Metra train in Lake Forest on their way to catch the Medici Exhibit at the Art Institute, they weren't expecting to be blessed with the sighting of a red-headed woodpecker along a bleak industrial corridor near the Loop, certainly not a ruby-throated hummingbird. Not in late December. But as their train slowed for its run into Northwestern Station, Allen caught glimpse of a perched blue jay. Then a white-throated sparrow. Then a ruby-throated hummingbird! Then the woodpecker. Can we please stop this train!

The three-foot tall images were freshly and expertly painted on the exterior of an old water tank that towered over a three-story brick building near the railroad tracks. Allen, a long time birder who led Hawk Watches at the National Audubon Center in Greenwich before moving to Chicago in 1987, was enamored enough of the unique bird sightings to drive back to the location a couple of days later with camera in hand. It is our great regret that we are not able to reproduce the accompanying photos in color, for they are truly beautiful. And by the way, for those casual birders who may not be aware of it, the most interestingly marked bird (arguably) represented on the tank, the white-throated sparrow, was well represented on area Christmas Bird Counts in December, 140 of them counted in downtown Chicago alone!

"That's exactly what we were hoping for" said Richard LeMoine, of LeMoine Studio, the art director who oversaw the painting portion of the old redwood tank restoration which was completed in October, "giving people who happen by something pleasant, something colorful to look at instead of

the same old industrial buildings and trackside bleakness."

And who is the person responsible for initiating this break from the mundane, and sacrificing lucrative advertising space in the process? That person would be Lech Losiowski, property manager of the block-long complex of turn-of-the-century buildings in the 400 block of North May Street (that's turn of the 20th century, folks).

Lech, a self-professed "nature-lover," said the tank was badly in need of repair, and opted to do away with a company logo when it came time to repaint. He confesses that there was a problem with competing commercial tenants (17 of them) desiring the tank's lofty exterior for advertising space, but — Gee, wouldn't it be neat to do something different? How about a scene depicting some form of nature? Perhaps swimming exotic fish? (Get it? Fish in a tank?).

Lech contacted a friend, LeMoine, and their collaboration resulted in a scene not of exotic fish, but of strikingly-plumaged local birds. (As source material LeMoine used Reader's Digest, Birds of America from which he picked-out colorful Midwestern species.)

And, true enough, all four species depicted on the tank are fairly common to the Chicago area year round — excluding the hummingbird, which anyone would be hard-pressed to locate during winter months (save for the rare extended visit of a rufous hummingbird still being sighted in an Elgin backyard as this issue of the Compass went to press in January).

So, our collective Audubon caps are tipped to Chicagoan Lech Losiowski and the artist he commissioned, Richard LeMoine (LeMoine Studio,

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White -throated sparrow at 400 N. May St., Chicago. Photos courtesy of Richard LeMoine



Ruby-throated hummingbird.

Chicago Flower and Garden Show — 2003

Chicago Audubon will again be sponsoring a booth at the Chicago Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier running from Saturday, March 8th through Sunday, March 16th. The purpose of the booth is to spread the word about Chicago Audubon, the environment, and the Center for New Birders opening in the spring at North Park Village. At the booth, we will be handing out information, offering specials on Chicago Audubon memberships, and selling a few items.

We need volunteers to help out at the booth, especially on the weekends and in the evenings. If you can help out, you will receive free admission to the show, but parking will not be covered.

Show hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. every day except Sundays, when the show closes at 6:00 p.m. The following time slots have been set up to make the scheduling easier: 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. If you would like to help, please call the office at 773/539-6793 with your first choice of day and time slot, and a second choice if possible.

The 15th Annual Cook County Owl Count Feb 28-March 2, 2003

The fifteenth annual Cook County Owl Count is coming Feb 28- March 2, sunset to dawn. Join us once again in surveying the owls of our metropolitan area. All that's needed is a tape recording of our local screech and great horned owls, and a sense of adventure. If you have an area you'd like to cover, let us know. If you want to participate but don't know how, we'll match you with a group that is already covering an area. Pending Cook County Forest Preserve District approval, we'll provide Forest Preserve permits to each group. This allows you to be on Forest Preserve property in the late evening, nighttime, and early morning hours. Participants from previous years and new owlers can sign up by calling Stephen or Christine Lee at (708) 485-8197. Our email address is stephenc@interaccess.com

Northwestern Abandons Plan to Fill Cooling Pond

by David Cohen

Northwestern University has abandoned plans to fill in an artificial cooling pond on the eastern edge of its Evanston campus. The University said last spring it intended to fill in 20% of the 19-acre pond, but drew a sharp reaction from students and area residents opposed to the initiative. Permitting authorities, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, also reacted against the proposal.

"We're not saying we'll never do it, but the plan is certainly on hold," said Alan Cubbage, a university spokesman. "The University is in the midst of an extensive building campaign, and we have more immediate issues that we need to deal with."

Northwestern built the lakefront pond in the early sixties. The university needed a source of cold water to cool its air conditioning system, and the pond, which feeds into Lake Michigan, was seen as a way of obtaining one. The cold water circulates in a utility plant near the pond and, slightly heated, is returned ultimately to the Lake. Operating the plant requires an Illinois EPA permit, and university officials feared that pursuing the lakefill would have jeopardized access to the EPA permit.

Northwestern's building campaign has sharply reduced open space on the campus, and the plan announced last spring would have shrunk the pond in order to expand an adjacent parking lot. The cancelled plan is good news for migratory and resident birds who need as much open green space and water as possible.

FEB 14-17 — SIXTH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Calling All Birdwatchers to Help Protect America's Birds and Habitats

"We need every birder to join us," said Audubon Senior Vice President of Science Frank Gill. "The Great Backyard Bird Count has become a vitally important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part. Whether you're a novice or an expert, we need you to take part and help us help birds."

A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited, the GBBC combines high-tech web tools with an army of citizen-scientist bird observers. The GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Participants enter their sightings at BirdSource, www.birdsource.org/gbbc. The state-of-the-art website was developed by Audubon and the Cornell Lab.

In 2002, more than 47,000 participants counted millions of birds throughout North America. They helped Audubon and Cornell Lab scientists make interesting observations. Evening grosbeaks, plentiful in California in 2001, were nearly absent in 2002. Snowy owls, magnificent hunters found predominantly in the northern part of the continent, were reported in 20 states and provinces during the 2002 count, including sightings from as far south as Oklahoma, Colorado, and Virginia. Last year's count was again instrumental in helping track winter finches, such as common red-

polls, pine grosbeaks, and white-winged crossbills, that periodically shift their winter ranges southward, particularly in the Northeast.

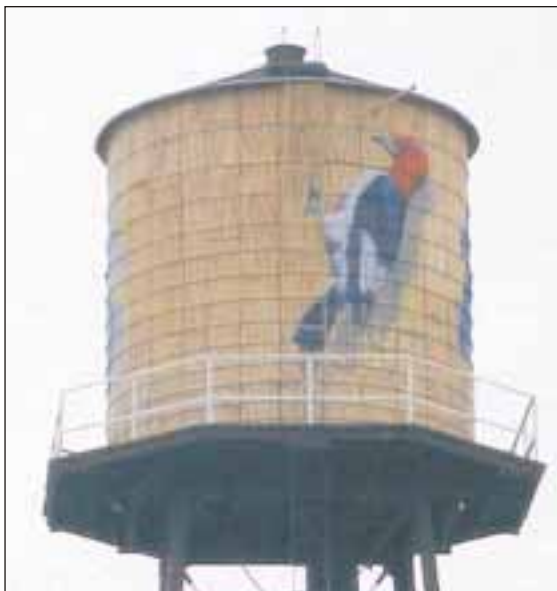
The site invites beginners and experts alike to participate, providing useful information to make participation easy and enjoyable. There is a vocabulary section, bird-watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more, including information about house finch eye disease. Educators will find the bibliography and geography sections especially handy; as well as suggestions on how to conduct the count with groups of kids. For those tired of winter and ready for spring, there will be tips about planning and preparing for the spring bird garden.

Instructions for participating can be found at www.birdsource.org. There's no fee or registration. Those who would like to participate but aren't online can try their local library. Many Wild Birds Unlimited locations also accept reports. Libraries, businesses, nature clubs, Scout troops and other community organizations interested in promoting the GBBC or getting involved can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call 607/254-2473); 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, or the National Audubon Society at 212/979-3083; 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

RESERVOIR

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Park Ridge) for having the vision to strike out and do something unselfishly different with the old May Street water tank (yes, it is filled with water, for the sprinkler system), for having the insight to remind all who pass-by that we denizens of the city are blessed to have such a reservoir of avian beauty in our midst, to help keep us aware that we have delicate creatures among us in need of our conserving attention. Who



Red-headed woodpecker.



Bluejay at 400 N. May St., Chicago. Photos courtesy of Richard LeMoine

knows, maybe Lech and Richard's vision will start a trend? Maybe we'll be seeing other rickety old rooftop water tanks transformed into refreshing scenes of nature. A few more local birds would be nice: a peregrine falcon; a belted kingfisher; a common nighthawk. And to think one of the high bidders for the tank's advertising potential was a trucking company! From the bottom of our little birder hearts, thank you, Lech.

COMPASS

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



Editor: Gail Goldberger
Layout Artist: Noël Maguigad

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Audubon info hotline: (847) 299-3505
Report sightings to: (847) 265-2117
Rare bird alert: (847) 265-2118
Activity line: (773) 539-6793, press 1
Web page:
www.homepage.interaccess.com/~stephenc/index.html

Audubon office: Manager, Karen Andersen, (773) 539-6793, fax (773) 539-6830, chicago_audubon@juno.com. Office hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

OFFICERS

President: Christine Lee, (708) 485-8197, stephenc@interaccess.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Hotline: Doris Johanson, (847) 827-5930.
Awards: Alan Anderson (see Research below)
Birdathon: Joe Lill, (773) 631-3154, trptjoe@aol.com
Bird Seed Savings Days: Al Rothenbach, (847) 816-6514, a_rothenbach@yahoo.com
Conservation: Carol Nelson, (773) 583-8616, blue2wings@aol.com
Field Trips: Stephen Lee, (708) 485-8197, stephenc@interaccess.com; and Doris Johanson, (847) 827-5930
Illinois Audubon Council: Al Rothenbach, see above.
Illinois Environmental Council: Gene Small, (773) 434-8328
Land Stewardship: Jerry Garden, (773) 545-4632, jerrygarden@sprynet.com
Nominating: Alan Anderson, (847) 390-7437, casresearch@attbi.com
Programs: Debra Fuller, (312) 744-5472, ddustin@ci.chi.il.us
Editorial/Advertising: Gail Goldberger, (773) 743-2457, gailgoldberger@earthlink.net
Noël Maguigad, (847) 563-3000 xt5259
compass@no-el.com
Publicity: Bill Schwaber, (847) 475-4986, formulae@mcs.net
Research: Alan Anderson, (847) 390-7437, casresearch@attbi.com; Judy Pollock, (847) 864-6393, bobolnk@ix.netcom.com



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CHICAGO AUDUBON CO-SPONSORS TRIPS TO SEE BALD EAGLES



If you've never seen a bald eagle before, Chicago Audubon is co-sponsoring two trips to the Mississippi River, this month and next, for eagle viewing.

The only eagle species living strictly in North America, our national symbol may live up to 40 years, weigh up to 15 pounds, and have a wing span of 80 inches, with females slightly larger than males. Eagles hunt by snatching prey—primarily fish—with their powerful talons.

Bald eagles can be seen along the Mississippi River, having flown south from their summer ranges in Canada and Alaska. Although the white head and tail of an adult are unmistakable, a juvenile eagle undergoes a series of plumage changes, is brownish in color, and does not acquire a white head and tail until it reaches four or five years of age.

Just three-and-a half years ago, the bald eagle was delisted from the endangered and threatened species list of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A conservation success story, bald eagles are more common today than they were at the turn of the century. One of the first birds listed when the Endangered Species Act was passed in 1973, bald eagle populations had been drastically reduced from a combination of habitat loss, illegal hunting, and the effects of pesticides, namely DDT and PCB's. The banning of DDT in 1972 and efforts to protect nesting sites and habitat, have led to the eagle's comeback.

On our winter eagle trips, you are likely to see eagles gliding over the river, perching on tall cottonwood tree limbs, sitting on their nests, or diving for fish. We hope you will join us on these exciting adventures. To sign up, see details on the Calendar of Events, Page 4.



The National Wildlife Refuge System

by Gail Goldberger

March 14, 2003 marks the 100th year anniversary of this country's National Wildlife Refuge System. It was founded in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt declared Pelican Island, the last remaining rookery for brown pelicans off the east coast of Florida, off limits to feather hunters and egg collectors. Pelican Island became the first of 54 Biological Survey "reservations" set aside for protection during Roosevelt's administration.

Many years of advocacy occurred prior to this act, stimulated by the relentless slaughter of birds for their feathers. Hundreds of thousands of herons, egrets, spoonbills and pelicans thrived in rookeries in and around the Indian River area of Florida. Paul Kroegel, a concerned German immigrant, brought one of the island rookeries to the attention of influential naturalists. In 1900, the first federal law called the Lacey Act was passed to protect birds and other wildlife from illegal interstate commerce. The Florida Audubon Society and the American Ornithologists Union fought and helped pass a state law protecting non-game birds in 1901. In 1902, Kroegel was hired as an Audubon warden to protect Pelican Island for a salary of \$1 a month. A year later, two curators from the American Museum of Natural History in New York, familiar with the

Celebrating

100

Years!

Island and Kroegel, convinced their acquaintance, President Roosevelt, to provide federal protection for Pelican Island.

This important law enabled the acquisition of 538 more refuges and 37 wetland management districts up until present time. But enforcement continued to be a problem throughout the 20th century. Numerous battles were fought in Florida alone with fisherman who viewed birds as competition and killed them, and developers who encroached on properties adjacent to protected areas. The Florida Audubon Society and local protection leagues were instrumental in stopping needless slaughters and securing protection of adjacent islands and wetlands through inclusion in the refuge system.

As recently as 1992, the National Audubon Society, Wilderness Society, Defenders of Wildlife and several Audubon chapters sued the Department of Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service for allowing and authorizing activities on these refuges that harm fish, wildlife and habitat. Fortunately, this resulted in a quick settlement that committed the Department and Service to enforce refuge regulations.

Today the system comprises 575 refuges and wetland districts, a total of 95 million acres. And more refuges are being added to the system. We are still fighting the same fights, and our battle cries remain the same: to protect wildlife we must protect their habitats. The far-flung chorus of creatures everywhere depends on our vigilance.

AUDUBON — *The Person*

by Don Darnell
CAS Board

Historically, one doesn't tend to think of the trail-blazing, Indian-fighting Daniel Boone in the same breath with John J. Audubon. However these two American icons not only roamed much of the same Kentucky-Missouri wilderness, their lives intersected, even bunking together on at least one occasion. Of course, by the time our namesake appeared on the Midwestern scene, "Colonel Boone" was already a living legend in his mid-to-late 70s, which makes the following Audubon journal record all the more remarkable:

"Daniel Boone, or as he was usually called in the Western country, Colonel Boone, happened to spend a night with me under the same roof... We had returned from a shooting excursion, in the course of which his extraordinary skill in the management of the rifle had been fully displayed. On retiring to the room appropriated to that remarkable individual and myself for the night, I felt anxious to know more of his exploits and adventures than I did, and accordingly took the liberty of proposing numerous questions to him [Audubon here learns how Boone avoided certain death by escaping a camp-full of Indian captors].

The stature and general appearance of this wanderer of the western forests approached the gigantic. His chest was broad and prominent; his muscular powers displayed themselves in every limb; his countenance gave indication of his great courage, enterprise and perseverance; and when he spoke, the very motion of his lips brought the impression that whatever he uttered could not be otherwise than strictly true. I undressed whilst he merely took off his hunting shirt, and arranged a few folds of blanket on the floor, choosing rather to lie there, as he observed, than on the softest bed."

Apparently, part of Boone's rifle management instruction was showing young Audubon how to "bark squirrels" off a tree, accomplished by exploding the bark just under a perched squirrel with a rifle shot, thus sending the dazed or dead animal flying to the ground for easy procurement. Another Audubon reminiscence of Kentucky marksmanship is that of "driving the nail," the object being to hit a partially driven nail on the head with a rifle shot from a good distance; the shooter hitting the nail directly and driving it all the way into the tree winning the contest. And here I always thought the term "hitting the nail on the head" implied the use of some sort of hammer. There is much to learn and enjoy in reading John J. Audubon's American and European journals.

*Look for more AUDUBON: THE PERSON in future issues of The Compass.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Stewardship Workdays

At the Skokie Lagoons: February 8 and March 8 at 10:00 a.m.

Chicago Audubon conducts regular monthly workdays at the Skokie Lagoons on the second Saturday of every month. Activities include buck-thorn cutting, animal and plant monitoring, cleanup and debris removal, 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

Member Programs

NOTICE OF CHANGE

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

These programs (open to the public, not just members) will now be held six times a year—April, May & June and September, October & November—at the same time and place, second Friday of the month. Watch future issues for program topics.

Field Trips

Two trips, Saturday—February 15 and March 8. EAGLE VIEWING at Lost Mound Wildlife Area, Savanna IL

Chicago Audubon is co-sponsoring two trips this year to view eagles along the Mississippi River: on Saturday, February 15 with the Chicago Botanic Garden and on Saturday, March 8 with the Field Museum.

During the winter, more bald eagles can be seen along the Mississippi River in Illinois than anywhere south of Alaska. Hundreds of eagles spend the winter feeding around the locks and dams and other open water areas, and roosting in the bluff areas.

Lost Mound Fish and Wildlife Area (formerly the Savanna Army Depot), now co-owned and managed by the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, is one spot where you can spot anywhere from 20-200+ eagles during the winter. In addition to eagles, we expect to see resident birds, including possibly wild turkeys and horned larks, as well as ducks and other species. After spending most of the day at the Depot, we will also check for eagles along the Fulton Dam, a bit farther south.

Dress for the weather (layered clothes are best for the warmer bus or colder outdoor temperatures) and bring a lunch, beverage, snacks, binoculars, field guide and spotting scope if you have one. The bus trip to Savanna is just over three hours. Your Audubon leader is Alan Anderson.

Feb. 15— 6:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. (Feb. 22 inclement weather date). Register by phone for course SPC0031: (847) 835-8261; \$59 CBG and CAS members/\$79 non-members. Bus leaves from Chicago Botanic Garden Gateway Annex, Glencoe at 6:00 a.m.

March 8— 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Register by phone: (312) 665-7400; \$55 FM and CAS members /\$70 non-members. Bus leaves from Field Museum west gate, Chicago at 6:00 a.m.

Bird Walks

Wednesday, March 26 - 8:00 a.m. Wooded Island Bird Walk - **on Paul Douglas's birthday**- meet at the Darrow Bridge just south of the Museum of Science and Industry. For more info call Doug Anderson (773) 493-7058

Saturday, March 29-8:00 a.m.- Wooded Island Bird Walk - Doug Anderson (773) 493-7058.

Every Wed. in April - 7:00 a.m. & every Sat. in April - 8:00 a.m. Wooded Island Bird Walk - Bring binoculars and field guide. Dress for the weather.

Every Saturday in April - 8:00 a.m. North Park Village Nature Center

Meet in front of the Nature Center at 5801 N. Pulaski Road. Walks are sponsored and led by Audubon guides. Bring binoculars and field guides. For more information, call the Nature Center at (773) 744-5472.

WOODCOCK COURTING FLIGHTS.

SUNSET — Wednesday, March 26 and Saturday, March 29 & Sunday, April 6 and Saturday, April 12.

You don't have to go far to see the high-flying courtship of this unusual looking bird. Join us at sunset (6:30 - 7:30 depending on the date) at Wolf Road Prairie (31st St. and Wolf Rd. in Westchester). We have had very good luck in the past eight years seeing woodcock flights on the Prairie. This year these trips will be co-sponsored by Save the Prairie Society. For exact times call Stephen or Christine Lee at (708) 485-8197 a day or two before the trips. E-mail: stephenc@interaccess.com.

Other Events

Lake Michigan Gull Frolic Saturday, February 15, 2003 from 9-4 p.m.

Come to the second annual Lake Michigan Gull Frolic to be held at the Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club. Winthrop Harbor is adjacent to the Wisconsin State line on Sheridan Road, and the Yacht Club entrance is off of 7th Street.

Speaker for the day is Tom Schultz, illustrator of bird guides, who will be giving a program on gulls. We will be chumming for gulls on the shores of Lake Michigan. Last year, 400 birders got life gulls on this day. We anticipate great good luck this year too.

For more information call Dave Johnson at (847) 459-3989, or Jim Landing (773) 252-8417.

The 15th annual Cook County Owl Count: Feb 28-March 2, 2003

From sunset to dawn. Join us once again in surveying the owls of our metropolitan area.

Participants from previous years and new owlers can sign up by calling Stephen or Christine Lee at (708) 485-8197. Our email address is stephenc@interaccess.com

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 will be on hand to answer questions. Five percent of the proceeds go to CAS and the Center for New Birders. Details to follow.

SAVE THE DATE!

Birdathon! 2003 dates have been set! Teams may compete for the coveted Beecher Cup on any day between **Wednesday, May 14 and Tuesday, May 20, 2003.** Contact Joe Lill at (773) 631-3154 or trptjoe@aol.com for more information.



YOUR MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS WILL RUN OUT IF YOU DON'T JOIN CHICAGO AUDUBON TODAY!

To sustain the Chicago Audubon Society, you must join the local chapter. Our chapter 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:

- Member meetings (6 per year)
- 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: _____