



COMPASS

Navigating the world of birds and nature

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Grant Park Conservancy Looks for Humane Ways to Solve the Goose "Problem" in Butler Field

By Sharon Parmet

At a well-attended meeting at the Grant Park field house this past March, about 40 people gathered to hear a lecture about poop, a.k.a. "droppings," "bombs," "pellets," "you know what," or, more abstractly, "blank."

"Like the Eskimos have dozens of words for snow, we Americans have untold number of descriptors for droppings," said Joel Brown, PhD, a professor of biological sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the man we all came to hear speak about the Grant Park goose dropping problem which mostly affects Butler Field, where the situation is "thick," shall we say.

Brown has previously consulted for the Grant Park Advisory Group at the invitation of Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Conservancy, to help brainstorm humane ways to deal with the rabbit problem that affected the park a few years ago when portions of it were under the tight horticultural grip of hundreds of rabbits that were causing thousands of dollars worth of destruction to trees and other plantings. Brown, an expert on animal foraging behavior, especially that of the various species that live in urban areas (including rabbits, squirrels, possums, raccoons and geese), gave several recommendations based on modifying the bunnies' behavior and which led to a significant decrease in the Grant Park rabbit population and the destruction they caused to park flora.

The multi-pronged approach used for the rabbits included wrapping young saplings with chicken wire, making them difficult for rabbits to chew on, and reducing some of the dense wildflower patches the rabbits were using for breeding grounds and for their dens.

With one Grant Park success under

his belt, Brown was back to address a new animal behavior problem. But this time, the problem was different, as one of Brown's slides informed the audience: "Its not their gardening, its their droppings."

Goose Biology 101

Grant Park, for the most part, is okay, goose-droppings wise. Its not until a visitor promenades onto Butler Field that their senses, not to mention their footwear, may become offended. Butler Field is a small area of the park used for concerts, and to show movies during the summer. The goose droppings make it nearly impossible for patrons of these events to spread out blankets and sit down, and O'Neill has received numerous complaints about the problem.

According to Brown, the reason for the staggering abundance of waste produced by geese can be blamed on their rather lame digestive systems. Whereas bunny droppings are practically sterile ash (due in part to the fact that a single poop gets digested not once, but twice...more on that later), goose poop is basically the same thing that goes in (grass) plus some digestive juices and cursory breakdown products that make it particularly mushy and gross.

What causes the difference in output quality between these two urban park inhabitants? It's a difference in how the two animals obtain nutrients from the food they eat. Geese feed like mad, nibbling up pounds and pounds of grass and other vegetation, only to extract the minute amounts of nutrition their guts are able to absorb, passing the bulk of what they consume (which is mostly indigestible cellulose). A single goose turns 1,500 pounds of grass into 750

pounds of droppings. A rabbit on the other hand, a much more efficient digester (but with the terrible price of having to eat its own poop, or "night pellets" in order to absorb enough water) takes its 1,500 pounds of grass, etc. and transforms it into just 150 pounds of droppings.

Goose Psychology 101

Solving the goose dropping problem starts with gaining an understanding of how geese behave, what makes them tick, and most importantly, how and why they congregate in large flocks.

Brown started with a general overview of the goose life cycle: Geese breed between March and May and form pair bonds that last for the breeding season, and sometimes for life. The female lays five to six eggs and incubates them for about 28 days. After hatching, the geese fledge in 45 to 70 days, and take two years before reaching sexual maturity. The male goose undergoes a molt right after the eggs are laid. During his molt, he can't fly, but that's okay, since his duty is to protect the nesting mother goose. The male goose takes this chore seriously, running after any threat that comes too close to the nest and hissing like mad. The female undergoes her molt while incubating the eggs, when she doesn't really fly anyway.

After fledging, young and adult geese spend several months bulking up on grass. Brown says that come the colder months, migration is optional for geese who have been feeding plentifully on the grasses in city parks. "If food is around, geese will tend to stay until there's pressure on them to leave to seek other food sources," says Brown. Geese can migrate later in the season if food



Canadian geese have been a problem at Grant Park's Butler Field.
Photo Credit: Monte

sources become depleted. Geese tend to visit multiple feeding sites, staying until the amount of energy they must expend to extract more nutrition becomes prohibitive (like when the goose really has to look for those last few blades of grass on a heavily grazed field). Then they move on en masse.

But geese don't look for just any patch of grass – they look for open, mowed fields, clear of obstructions like tree stands, gardens and other structures that can break up the field. This setup provides the best landscape for these relatively heavy birds to take flight. A goose needs about a dozen clear feet in order to run and gain liftoff. However, geese prefer to escape danger by waddling into water, an evasive maneuver that requires much less energy than taking flight. For this reason, the most attractive goose landscape is an open, mowed field with a slight decline leading to a body of water. Geese also like open spaces because they provide clear sight-lines and they can see danger coming from a long way off.

So, its no surprise they like the open space of Butler Field. Knowing how geese operate lends valuable insight to researchers and park planners regarding ways to discourage geese from visiting certain areas. Brown gave several suggestions on how to make Butler Field less attractive to geese. Most involved reducing the open space of the field by either planting trees or hedgerows, or by

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Flint Creek Northerly Island Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Opened April 1

Facility is the only rehabilitation center within Chicago city limits

By Sharon Parmet

On April 1, an injured bird's chance of survival in the Loop jumped exponentially with the opening of Flint Creek Northerly Island Rehabilitation center, just minutes from downtown Chicago in the former Miegs Field terminal building (now the Northerly Island Field House). Flint Creek Northerly Island is a satellite operation of Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation center located in Barrington, Illinois, and founded by rehabber Dawn Keller.

Flint Creek Northerly Island will be the first wildlife rehabilitation facility within city limits, and will be used primarily to rehabilitate and care for birds injured during the spring and fall migration seasons when they collide with buildings as they make their way along migratory fly ways that take them through the Loop. It will also help birds hit by cars, tangled in fishing lines and birds of prey that have sustained injuries. Flint Creek Northerly Island will accept injured birds by appointment only.

The Chicago Bird Collision Monitors (CBCM), a volunteer organization of about 70 individuals, patrols an approximately one square mile section of the Loop each morning during the migration season to collect birds injured by collisions with buildings. The Loop sits

on a major flyway that birds follow during their north-south migrations. When birds reach the Loop (or any other major metropolitan area) they can get drawn to building lights, and get confused by reflective glass, which they attempt to fly through. It is estimated that about seven million birds, composed of approximately 300 species, fly through the city each year.

Before the opening of the Flint Creek Northerly Island facility, CBCM volunteers would have to drive injured birds to rehabilitation facilities up to an hour or more away from downtown Chicago, using up time that could have been spent looking for additional bird casualties. The opening of Flint Creek Northerly means that birds injured and picked up by CBCM volunteers will receive medical attention sooner, boosting their chances of survival and allowing monitors to extend the time they spend monitoring the Loop.

Last migration season (fall 2005), CMCB volunteers rescued more than 1,100 injured birds. Of these, about 80 percent of birds treated at Flint Creek in Barrington were successfully released. That percentage is expected to rise with the opening of Flint Creek Northerly Island.

Flint Creek Northerly Island fits into a larger plan for the former Miegs Field airport to be transformed into a large nature park. Funds raised by a concert

venue installed on the island (the Charter One Pavilion) which will be in place for several years, will help offset the costs of the plantings, trails and other features that will be needed to create and sustain the Northerly Island nature park.

The Chicago Park District is currently providing the space in the old terminal building for free, and the center will be funded by private donations. The facility plans to kick off a fundraising campaign to raise funds needed for outdoor rehabilitation cages, equipment, supplies and permanent staff. If you are interested in making a personal donation toward the Flint Creek Northerly Island rehab clinic, cash donations are welcome and tax-exempt. You can contribute online at the Flint Creek web site www.flintcreekwildlife.org. Checks made payable to Flint Creek may also be sent by regular mail to: Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation Inc. 117 S. Cook St., #145 Barrington, IL 60010.

Flint Creek Northerly Island is made possible by the joint efforts of CBCM, Flint Creek Rehabilitation's founder and director, Dawn Keller; Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Conservancy, and the Chicago Park District.

Twenty-one Birds Move In, Redecorate North Park Village Nature Center

By Marci Buettgen

On March 18th, just in time for spring migration, the Chicago Audubon Society formally dedicated "Birds of North Park Village Nature Center," a permanent photo exhibit now on display inside the bird blind, next to the main building at the Nature Center, located at 5801 North Pulaski Road in northwest Chicago.

The exhibit, a 4' x 6' sign made of weather resistant polyvinyl, features 21 full-color photos of birds likely to be seen at various seasons of the year around the Nature Center, such as the Great Blue Heron, Cooper's Hawk, Wood Duck, Indigo Bunting and Scarlet Tanager.

The Chicago Audubon Society organized this project with the support of corporate partner, Eagle Optics, and photographer Jerry Kumery.

"We are very grateful to our project partners. Without their cooperation, we wouldn't have this beautiful exhibit to present to the Nature Center," said Alan Anderson, vice president of the Chicago Audubon Society. "Every year, about 65,000 visitors come through the Nature Center and this bird photo exhibit should inspire them to see and enjoy more birds." Anderson said.

In addition to the spectacular photos, the exhibit invites viewers to join the spring and fall bird walks sponsored, free of charge, by the Chicago Audubon Society and held at the Nature Center



Partners in the bird photo exhibit project meet at the dedication: photographer Jerry Kumery, North Park Village Nature Center Director Claudia Regojo, Ben Lizdas of Eagle Optics, and Chicago Audubon Society vice president Alan Anderson. Photo by Roger Shamley

every Saturday at 8:00 a.m., throughout the months of April, May, September and October.

Ben Lizdas, of Eagle Optics was in town to participate in the Chicago Audubon Society's Birding America Conference and attended the dedication ceremony. Eagle Optics, located in Middleton, Wisconsin, is the largest independent sports optics dealer in the United States, and was a major contributor to the photo exhibit. The company has a long history of support for conservation programs across the country, including the Chicago Audubon Society's programs for beginning birders.

Jerry Kumery, who provided the exhibit's photos, has been photographing birds, wildlife and nature for over 20 years. His travels have taken him to 16 countries on five continents. A Chicago native, he remembers getting "hooked"

on birding during a bird walk around Lincoln Park in the 70s led by Chicago Audubon Society Board member, Doug Anderson, famous for his Wooded Island bird walks he leads almost every weekend to this day. More of Kumery's remarkable photos can be seen in "The Chicago Region Birding Trail Guide," a 27-page booklet published last summer by the City of Chicago.

North Park Village Nature Center is situated on the northwest side of Chicago and includes a forty-six acre nature preserve and an educational facility. Walking trails wind through woodlands, wetlands, prairie and savannas. The Nature Center is open seven days a week, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 362 days a year, and is closed only for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. For more information, or to sign up for a free quarterly newsletter, call 312/744-5472.

7th Annual Dr. William S. Beecher Birdathon Cup Challenge: May 20th – 21st

By Joe Lill, CAS president & Birdathon coordinator

Spring is just about here and soon the Chicago area will once again be teeming with migratory and nesting birds. Outside my window Dark-eyed Juncos are trilling and Killdeer are calling. Along with spring comes one of the highlights of the season, Birdathon! This year will be the 7th annual Dr. William S. Beecher Birdathon Cup Challenge.

The 2005 Birdathon was the largest and most competitive in Beecher Cup history. The team from Lake Forest College (Caleb Gordon, Ben Goluboff, Jeff Sundberg and Kris Sundberg) retained control of the coveted Cup by identifying a record 160 species in a single day! Tied for second were the BudBirders and Team Grandala, both of which identified 153 species, which would have garnered the Cup in any other year. Three other teams, the Steel Belted Kingfishers, the Past President's Posse, and the Chicago Birdlovers, also competed. For the first time we had a junior team, the Hawks (Cameron Fife and Jacob Lill), who were a welcome addition to the competition. All together, last year's seven teams raised almost \$4,000 for the programs of the Chicago Audubon Society.

Again this year, all funds raised through Birdathon pledges will go toward CAS programs. With cuts in

funding from National Audubon, it has become more important than ever that each local chapter, including Chicago Audubon, raise more of their operating expenses on their own. Our programs in education, preservation, restoration and advocacy have continued to be well-received. Two examples include the Chicago Audubon Early Birds program, which provides seminars and walks to new birders of all ages, and our scholarship program, which will send two teenagers to the Audubon camp in Minnesota this summer.

To raise funds for these and other endeavors, Birdathon 2006 teams will be going out during the weekend of May 20th-21st. We would love to add more teams this year, and get even more birders involved. If you are a member of a group of birders who'd like to compete, great! However, if you're a "stray cat" who'd like to join a team, we'll try to help with that, too. Not very experienced? Don't worry, we'll find a team for you. Many birders (including me) have added species to their life lists on Birdathon day.

If you know of a school group, or a youth organization (Scouts, youth groups, etc.) that would be interested in entering the Junior competition, please let me know.

Birdathon teams raise money through pledges. Pledgers can give a flat amount (as many have done in the past), pledge

an amount per species identified by a team, or pledge an amount based on the total species count of all teams, which, last year, was 184 species (also a Birdathon record, by three species). Contact the Chicago Audubon Society office to request a pledge form if you did not receive one in the mail.

The late Dr. William S. Beecher was Director Emeritus of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, and one of the pioneering birders in the Chicago area. The Board of Directors of the Chicago Audubon Society is honored that he consented to the use of his name for our competition.

Here are the Birdathon rules:

- 1) Each team must have three to six members (Junior teams may have more participants).
- 2) Birding is to be confined to any one day (24 hours) between May 20th and May 21st, 2006.
- 3) All birds must be seen or heard by at least two team members.
- 4) All birds must be seen or heard in Cook County, Ill.
- 5) Your team must bring in at least \$100 in pledges (this is not required of Junior teams).

The team that gets the most species will gain possession (for one year) of the coveted Beecher Cup! Prospective teams should contact Joe Lill at 773/631-3154 or e-mail trptjoe@aol.com before May 15th.

GEESE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

stringing streamers up between the light posts that circle the field, making it less attractive for them to land and take off from. Installing small architectural elements, perhaps sculptures or arches, was another suggestion.

O'Neill says that the Grant Park

Conservancy is closely examining several of these options to help reduce the goose population in Grant Park, including the streamers, planting more trees and adding mini-gardens. "We want to try to develop ways to balance our human and wild populations in the city," says O'Neill. "If you think about it, it's a good problem to have – the

Canada goose was almost extinct in the 1960s due to hunting and habitat destruction. Now that they've rebounded, we owe it to them to come up with humane ways to make specific urban landscapes used heavily by city people a little bit less attractive to them."

COMPASS
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Wolf Road Prairie Faces New Threats from Developers

By Sharon Parmet

Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve, recognized as the largest and best-quality remnant of original prairie habitat east of the Mississippi River, is again under threat by developers who hope to turn two portions of the "buffer zone" west of the prairie (a 10-acre and 15-acre parcel) into tracts of homes and condominium buildings.

Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve is an 80 acre site of high-quality, rare black-soil prairie, savanna, marshes and wetlands. It is located in Westchester, Illinois, just 12 miles west of downtown Chicago. It is jointly owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (ILDNR) and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) and is a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve, managed jointly by the ILDNR, the FPDCC, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and the Save The Prairie Society (STPS).

The prairie is bordered by an additional 60 acres of "buffer zone," to the west, 23 acres of which are protected by ILDNR and FPDCC. Buffer zones are often undeveloped or wooded borders that help insulate protected natural areas against the impact of the developed world surrounding them. Buffer zones can help prevent erosion by slowing runoff from paved surfaces and lawns with poor soils and low water retention. They can also help filter water (and pollution-containing air, to some extent) before it enters natural protected areas.

Development of portions of the buffer zone to the west of Wolf Road Prairie would significantly increase the existence of manicured lawns and paved areas, which could negatively impact the overall hydrology, or water flow, through the prairie and threaten rare prairie flora. Part of the proposed development includes the creation of a paved road into the 10-acre parcel, which would increase runoff in the area. Any reduction in the delicately-balanced botanical populations could in turn reduce the area of preferred habitat for birds and insects that rely on this unique prairie habitat for nesting and courting grounds, and for food and shelter.

The prairie is extremely rich in biodiversity, with more than 360 native plant species identified there, along with 136 bird species, including the Great Horned Owl, Northern Harrier and many grassland birds. The prairie is famous for its beautiful displays of rare wild hyacinth and wild geranium in the spring, and serves as the terrestrial platform from which the male Woodcock performs his spectacular aerial mating displays every April. Its mammalian inhabitants currently include a family of coyotes with three pups.

The FPDCC, currently has an OSLAD grant to help them acquire privately-owned pieces of property



The famous wild hyacinths at Wolf Road Prairie that bloom each May along with thousands of other spring ephemerals and wild geraniums.

within the in the buffer zone to the west of Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve.

Wolf Road Prairie has almost continuously been under threat of development since the 1920s when developers eyed it for a housing subdivision. Sidewalks were even installed in anticipation of the homes that never came, thanks to the Great Depression. Today, the sidewalks still remain, anachronistically criss-crossing the prairie. Since then, the Prairie has been threatened by development many times, and IDNR, FPDCC and STPS have worked to acquire segments of the buffer zone throughout the years.

For more information on what is going on at Wolf Road Prairie or to learn how you can help, please contact the Save The Prairie Society at 708/865-8736 or e-mail STPSemail@aol.com. Go to www.savetheprairiesociety.org to visit their website.

Learn About the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project and How You Can Help Protect Illinois' Remnant Swainson's Population

Join your fellow birders at North Park Village Nature Center to hear about Illinois' unique population of Swainson's Hawks and the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project. On Thursday, May 25 at 7:00 p.m., Vic Berardi, a local hawk expert, will discuss these magnificent birds and how you can get involved in studying and protecting them in Kane and McHenry counties where a small population of nesting pairs has been observed since 1973.

The tiny Illinois population is unique because it is out of the normal nesting range of the Swainson's Hawk, which extends from Alaska to Mexico and from California to the Mississippi River. The Illinois Swainson's Hawks are the only nesters of their kind east of the Mississippi River.

The Swainson's Hawk is on the Illinois Endangered Species List B, and their breeding grounds in Kane and McHenry counties have been listed as top sites for Audubon's Illinois Important Bird Areas (IBA) program. There is concern over the future of these Illinois Swainson's Hawks as their nesting grounds are threatened by further development, especially in the Hampshire area. Unless the Hawks and their habitat are studied and documented, the prospect of protecting their nesting grounds can significantly diminish. More data needs to be collected to help determine their future. Of the approximately five or six nesting pairs of Swainson's Hawks observed in this region over the years, up to about three chicks are fledged each nesting season. Many chicks are killed by owls which prey on them for food.

The Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project (ISHP) is a joint effort to study the small remnant population of breeding Swainson's Hawks in northern Illinois. This spring and summer, volunteers will help record sightings of Swainson's Hawks in their known nesting locations in Kane and McHenry

Use Your Birding Skills to Help Out With the Cook County West Nile Virus Study

Why did West Nile virus spread so quickly in 2002, especially in Illinois, which led the nation in incidences of the virus and associated deaths? What will happen in future years? How do birds that carry the virus affect its spread?

You are invited to join the University of Illinois, Chicago, the Audubon Chicago Region and the Bird Conservation Network (BCN) in a collaborative, three-year study of West Nile virus to answer these and other questions. Birders are needed to work with University of Illinois researchers to help determine whether there are differences in bird species composition between West Nile virus hot spots and other areas.

Mosquitoes are the major carriers of the virus, and they can get it by feeding on the blood of infected birds. The collaborative study will pull together layers of data on mosquitoes, demographics and landscape features as well as birds, in order to model the spread of the disease. The bird population census is crucial to understanding the role of birds in disease transmission and to better protect both birds and people from West Nile virus.

Birders who can recognize the birds of urban and suburban landscapes by sight and sound are needed during June and early July to count birds along pre-set driving routes in Cook County, including a number of routes in Chicago. If you are not quite sure about your bird song identification abilities, we will provide a CD of bird songs for you to learn. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Judy Pollock at jpollock@audubon.org, or call 847/965-1150.

About West Nile Virus

According to the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Northern House mosquito, *Culex pipiens*, is the primary carrier of West Nile virus. This mosquito species thrives in water with high organic content, such as water found in storm sewers. Hot, dry summers significantly increase the risk of West Nile virus infection, which is counterintuitive to what most people believe. The large swarms of mosquitoes that appear after heavy rains are definitely a nuisance, but they rarely are infected with West Nile virus.

In 2002 some 4,156 human cases (284 of them fatal) of West Nile-related illness were reported nationally. Illinois led the nation with 884 reported cases of West Nile Virus and 67 deaths. In Chicago there were 225 reported cases and 22 deaths. Human case numbers fell off dramatically in 2003, with just four reported illnesses and no fatalities in Chicago. In 2004 there were six cases (one fatal) in the city. In 2005, there were four reported human cases of West Nile-related illness in the state.

The West Nile virus can infect

humans, birds, mosquitoes, horses, and some other mammals. In 1999, the virus occurred in the Western hemisphere for the first time, with the first cases reported in New York City. Since then, West Nile virus has been considered an emerging infectious disease in the United States, and has spread down the East Coast to many southern and Midwestern states.

West Nile virus occurs in late summer and early fall in temperate zones, but can occur year-round in southern climates. Usually, the West Nile virus causes mild, flu-like symptoms, called West Nile fever. However, the virus can cause life-threatening illnesses such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord), or meningoencephalitis (inflammation of the brain and its surrounding membrane). People of all ages are susceptible to West Nile infection, but people over age 50 are at greater risk of developing severe illness.

Preventing West Nile Virus

CDPH officials ask all Chicagoans to take precautions to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites. Especially important is the use of insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide), Picaridin (KBR 3023) or Oil of Lemon eucalyptus (PMD).

An example of a product containing Picaridin is Cutter Advanced Insect Repellent, available at stores across the city.

In addition to using insect repellent to avoid bites, CDPH officials advise:

- Consider limiting outdoor activity after dark (dusk to dawn), which is when the Northern House mosquito is most active.
- When outside between dusk and dawn, wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing that includes long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks and shoes.
- Check to see that all screens on doors and windows are tight-fitting and free of holes and tears.
- Encourage neighbors to exercise precautions.
- To limit mosquito breeding opportunities, CDPH officials recommend:
 - Draining and replacing water in birdbaths and children's backyard wading pools every four to five days.
 - Properly disposing of old tires, jars, cans, pans, bottles, buckets and other unwanted containers that can hold standing water.
 - Making sure that rain gutters, downspouts, swimming pools and pool covers are free of standing water.
 - Keeping grass and weeds cut short to eliminate hiding places for adult mosquitoes.

counties and the surrounding areas, including the townships of Marengo, Hampshire, Starks and Huntley. They will also drive designated routes in the region to survey for the hawks and hopefully locate new or previously unknown areas where these birds may be breeding.

The purpose of this research is to determine where, when and why Swainson's Hawks use this very limited area for breeding, and more importantly, to determine if they use any of the surrounding regions.

During his presentation, Vic will give an overview of the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project along with a brief history of the Swainson's Hawk in

Illinois. A thorough identification session will also be presented including how to determine age differences based on molt and plumage characteristics and comparisons to similar raptor species. If you would like to become a volunteer for the ISHP, this is an excellent opportunity to find out more about the project and meet with Vic to determine how you can best get involved.

If you can't make Vic's talk, and are still interested in participating in the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project, you can contact Bob and Anita Morgan at 708/351-9404 or e-mail amorgan@sxu.edu. You can also visit the ISHP web page at <http://bcnbirds.org/shp/index.html>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Birdathon

The 7th Annual Dr. William S. Beecher Birdathon Cup Challenge will be held the weekend of May 20th – 21st. To learn more about how you can participate in Birdathon, please contact Joe Lill, Birdathon coordinator at 773/631-3154 or e-mail trtpjoe@aol.com before May 15th.

Spring Migration Bird Walks

**North Park Village Nature Center
5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago
Every Saturday in May
8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.**

Don't miss Yellow Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings and other colorful migratory birds as they return to the North Park Village Nature Center. Chicago Audubon Society guides lead spring bird walks each Saturday morning in April and May. Bring binoculars or check out a pair of ours. Free; no registration required. Ample free parking available. Meet in front of the Nature Center. Contact Don Klimovich, 773/878-4421.

Special Bird Walk for New Birders

**North Park Village Nature Center
5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago
Saturday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

This special bird walk starts in the Main Meeting Room of the North Park Village Nature Center with an overview of the basics, including tips on identifying birds, how to use binoculars, and how to select and use field guides. After the lecture, experienced Chicago Audubon Society guides will help new birders spot and identify birds during a leisurely walk around the Nature Center grounds. Bring binoculars or check out a pair of ours. Open to all ages; youngsters under 16 should be accompanied by an adult. Free, but advance registration is required.

Ample free parking available. To register, contact Marci Buettgen, phone: 773/878-4421, or, e-mail: mdbchgo@comcast.net.

Armchair Birding For New Birders

**- No Walking Required
North Park Village Nature Center
5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago
Saturday, May 20, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

The Chicago Audubon Society takes the "walk" out of "birdwalk" for anyone interested in birding, but not up to hiking around nature trails. Armchair Birding starts in the Main Meeting Room at the North Park Village Nature Center with an overview of the basics, such as tips on identifying birds, how to use binoculars, and selecting field guides. Then, experienced guides help new birders locate and identify birds from the outdoor deck of the Nature Center using binoculars and spotting scopes. Open to all ages; youngsters under 16 should be accompanied by an adult. Free, but advance registration is required. Ample free parking available. To register, contact Marci Buettgen, phone: 773/878-4421, or, e-mail: mdbchgo@comcast.net.

Wooded Isle Walks

These walks will be held every Saturday at 8:00 a.m.

Bring binoculars and field guides and dress for the weather. Meet at Clarence Darrow Bridge, just south of the Museum of Science and Industry. If you have any questions, please call Doug Anderson at 773/493-7058.

Mother's Day Bird Walk

Join us for a pleasant stroll on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14 from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. at Thatcher Woods to look at all the arriving spring migrants along the DesPlaines River Valley. Meet at the Trailside Museum parking lot west of the intersection of Thatcher Road and Chicago Avenue (on the south side) in River Forest. If you have any questions, call Christine or Stephen Lee at 708/485-8197 or e-mail stephenchris@sbcglobal.net

Herrick Lake Forest Preserve Bird Walk

Saturday, June 10, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Herrick Lake Forest Preserve is located in DuPage County near the town of Wheaton. There is a crushed limestone bike path around the preserve which we will walk during the trip. This is a good place in early summer for Bobolinks, Blue Birds, Sedge Wrens, and Field Sparrows, as well as Wood Thrushes and Ovenbirds.

To get to Herrick Lake Forest Preserve take the Eisenhower Expressway out of the city and continue west on I-88. Exit at Naperville Road and turn north (left). Travel a couple of miles to Butterfield Road. Turn west (left) on Butterfield Road and continue at least 2 more miles to Herrick Road, (just past Arrowhead Golf Course and Herrick Lake). Turn left on Herrick Road at the light. It is only a quarter mile or so to the Herrick Forest Preserve trailhead on your left. Meet in the parking lot by the bike path. If you have any questions, e-mail Chris & Stephen Lee at stephenchris@sbcglobal.net or call 708/485-8197.

Montrose Point and the Magic Hedge Stewardship Workdays

Montrose Point, home of the Magic Hedge, needs your help. We are conducting monthly workdays the first Saturday of the month May through November. This is a unique opportunity to garden on the lakefront as we work on establishing native vegetation and removing invasive species like blackthorn and burdock. Our goals are to create an environment that will enhance the health and well-being of birds that use the point during migration and during nesting season, to enhance opportunities for bird watchers, and provide opportunities for the public to learn about natural areas and the importance and beauty of native landscape.

Exciting new developments at Montrose Point include a large area of the meadow that was planted with a fantastic collection of native prairie plants last fall and a collection of 10 different species of shrubs that were planted in the Magic Hedge this spring.

Directions: Meet at the Magic Hedge located on Montrose Ave., east

of Lake Shore Drive. Drive east on Montrose Ave. towards the Lake and as the road turns north take the first right by the bait shop. Continue to the nature area on the left, just before the harbor parking lot as the road starts to curve right around the harbor.

For more information, contact David Painter at Dvdpaint@yahoo.com or 773/935-1387.

Skokie Lagoons Workdays

Upcoming Skokie Lagoons Saturday, May 13; Saturday, June 10 and Saturday, July 8 starting at 10:00 a.m.

The Chicago Audubon Society conducts regular monthly workdays at the Skokie Lagoons every second Saturday of every month. Activities include buckthorn cutting, brushpile burning and other management activities. Meet at the Tower Road parking lot, east of the lagoon bridge. For further information, call Jerry Garden at 773/545-4362 or e-mail him at jerrygarden@sprynet.com.

Illinois Spring Bird Count

All day, Saturday, May 6, is the Illinois Spring Bird Count. Birders will cover the entire state, counting all the birds they see. Participants can count birds for any amount of time. The count is organized by county, with a coordinator for each county.

If you would like to help in Cook County, contact Alan Anderson at casresearch@comcast.net.

Coordinators in other area counties include:

Lake County: Danny Diaz, Ddzhawkeye@aol.com

Kane County: Jon Duerr, 630/584-5891

DuPage County: Bob Fisher, BFisher928@aol.com

Will County: Jim Kelly, 708/798-3115

McHenry County: Dwight Dalton, 815/459-6069

For other counties, please check out <http://home.xnet.com/~ugeiser/Birds/BirdCounts.html>

For current information you may also contact the state compiler, Vern Kleen, at 217/787-3515 or kleen@quixnet.net.

June 10th is Annual Breeding Bird Blitz Day

The 4th Annual Breeding Bird Blitz will focus on shrublands

Between June 9th and 19th, and especially on June 10th, the official 4th Annual Breeding Bird Blitz Day, hundreds of citizen scientists will count the birds in the shrublands of the Chicago region, collecting valuable data on shrubland birds and their populations.

Chicago Wilderness, an alliance of 185 public and private organizations working together to study, restore, protect and manage the precious natural resources of the Chicago region, has designated shrubland birds as a top priority for breeding bird data collection in spring 2006. This new emphasis on shrubland birds is based on the release of a regional report card that showed insufficiencies in data on the numbers and distributions of shrubland bird species. By putting a special emphasis on shrublands, Chicago Wilderness, which coordinates data collection for the Breeding Bird Blitz, has added 70 sites to the existing list of annually monitored grasslands.

Volunteers are needed to identify all

potentially important shrubland sites and count the birds in as many of these sites as possible. Chicago Wilderness officials hope to learn the relative population size and distribution of rare and important species, and identify and describe sites that have great potential for shrubland bird habitat. In the future, volunteers will track changes in shrubland bird populations and learn how habitat management efforts are affecting shrubland birds.

The Annual Breeding Bird Blitz collects data that tells scientists the status and distribution of breeding birds on a region-wide scale. Grassland and shrubland birds are a top priority of Chicago Wilderness because of their global rarity and dramatic declines in the last century. The Chicago region has some of the largest and best-protected habitats for these birds. In 2003 and 2004, monitors counted 1,653 Bobolinks (the most recorded species of this study), 457 Grasshopper Sparrows, 258 Henslow's Sparrows, and three Northern Harriers (a species rarely

found east of the Mississippi River). Volunteers found 12 grassland species (out of 18 that historically have occurred here) in ten counties.

If you can identify shrubland birds (see list below) and would like to spend a morning counting them with a team or on your own, please contact the county Breeding Bird Blitz coordinator in the region you would like to count in:

- Cook – Alan Anderson; 847/390-7437; casresearch@comcast.net
- DuPage – Bob Fisher; 630/985-2956; Bfisher928@aol.com
- Indiana – Barb Dodge; 219/992-2413
- Kane – Roger Hotham; 847/697-7484
- Lake – Donnie Dann; 847/266-2222; donniebird@yahoo.com
- Will – Dick Riner; 708/720-5683; rrinersprint5@earthlink.net

If you already cover a shrubland for the BCN Census, your June 2006 data will be included in this season's Breeding Bird Blitz.

Shrubland birds of Chicago



One of the most-counted birds on last year's Breeding Bird Blitz Day.

Wilderness: Bell's Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, Lark Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Bobwhite, Orchard Oriole, Prairie Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-billed Cuckoo.