



# COMPASS

*Navigating the world of birds and nature*

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 5

MAY 2003

## GET READY FOR BIRDATHON! 2003

THE FOURTH ANNUAL DR. WILLIAM BEECHER CUP CHALLENGE  
May 14 – 20

by Joe Lill

Just yesterday at my son's school, I saw my first common grackle of the year. Reports of migrating sandhill cranes are coming in from various locations around northeastern Illinois. And northern shovelers and wood ducks were sighted in the wetlands at North Park Village Nature Center.

### **BIRDATHON! 2003 can't be far behind!**

The winners of Birdathon! 2002, the Lake Forest College Birders (Caleb Gordon, Bill Moskoff, Jeff Sundberg and Kris Sundberg) recaptured the coveted Beecher Cup, and yes, bragging rights, by identifying 140 species in a single day.

Following closely behind were the defending champions, the BudBirders, who had 132 species. Three other teams, the Thick-kneed Kingfishers, the President's Posse and the Village People, also competed. The five teams of 23 birders raised over \$9,000 for Chicago Audubon.

This year, funds raised through Birdathon! pledges will go toward our programs. With cuts in funding from National Audubon, it is more important than ever that each local chapter raise more of their own operating expenses. Our programs in education, preservation, restoration and advocacy have been well-received, and we'd like to continue our work, with your help.

To raise funds, Birdathon! 2003 teams will be going out during the week of May 14-20. We'd love to add more teams this year, and get even more birders involved.

### **How can you get involved?**

- If you have your own group of birders who'd like to compete, great!
- If you're a "stray cat" who'd like to join a team, we can help with that too.



*This Could be Your Team!*

The 2002 third-place winning team, the thick-kneed kingfishers, came in with 130! species. From left to right, Caitlin Lill, Don Darnell, Ralph Herbst, Alan Anderson, and Joe Lill.

- 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 organization (Scouts, youth groups) that would be interested in entering the Junior competition, please contact me.

You will also receive in the mail a pledge form with a number of options. You can pledge a flat amount (as many have done in the past), pledge an amount per species identified by your favorite team, or pledge an amount based on the total species count of all teams, which last year, was 158 species. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, and start forming your team!

The competition is named after the late Dr. William Beecher, Director Emeritus of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, and one of the pioneering birders in the Chicago area. The Board of Directors of Chicago Audubon is

honored that he consented to the use of his name for our competition.

### **The rules for competing in Birdathon!**

- Each team must have three to six members. (*Junior teams may have more participants.*)
- Birding is to be confined to any one day between May 14 and 20, 2003
- All birds must be seen or heard by at least two team members.
- All birds must be seen or heard in Cook County, Illinois.
- 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 me at (773) 631-3154 or [trptjoe@aol.com](mailto:trptjoe@aol.com) before May 10<sup>th</sup>.**

## International Migratory Bird Day

### **—Birds as Catalysts**

Set on the second Saturday in May, International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation. Like any recognition day, IMBD exists to focus attention on a valuable resource - the nearly 350 species of migratory birds that travel between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

The theme for this year's event, *Birds as Catalysts*, explores how birds have been the inspiration for many of the most significant conservation actions in the Americas. Thanks to birds, people have been motivated to improve conditions for all wildlife...and ourselves.

Although IMBD is officially a single-day observance, it is not limiting; events will occur throughout the spring. For more information and to find an event near you visit: <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd/>

Locally, the Brookfield Zoo is hosting **IMBD** celebrations on both Saturday and Sunday, May 10 and 11. In the west section of the zoo, look for five birding stations, three migration stations, a banding station and other special birding exhibits. For more information call Aggie Blesy at (708) 485-0263 ext. 320 or [agblesy@brookfield-zoo.org](mailto:agblesy@brookfield-zoo.org).



Photo by Kanae Hirabayashi

Eastern bluebird - a colorful and lucky sighting on Birdathon!



Photo by Kanae Hirabayashi

The bobolink is one of 131 bird species listed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as being in need of conservation attention.



# Nesting Success for Common Terns at Great Lakes Naval Training Center



Steven D'Amato

by Donald Dann

The common tern is endangered in Illinois. Though no nesting records for them exist between 1985 and 1996, records between 1975 and 2002 show that there were four years that terns successfully fledged their young in Illinois.

Terns prefer nesting in sandy areas on dunes, rocky islets or lakeshores. Extensive development of our shoreline has diminished habitat for this shorebird. Ironically, the fly ash settling ponds of a Waukegan coal power plant provided habitat that proved successful for terns, the most successful year being 1998 when seven fledglings were confirmed. Other areas near and around Waukegan have also proved fruitful for this species, albeit with intense human intervention.

In late summer of 1999, while mon-

itoring for shorebirds on a small island at the northeast corner of the harbor at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, I noticed broken terns' eggs indicating possible nesting attempts.

In 2000, I resumed monitoring the island and observed many terns building nests. By mid-June there were no nests remaining. I enlisted the help of Brad Semel, Heritage Biologist for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and we concluded that the island needed to be protected from the peninsula to prevent predation.

By 2001, we secured approval and funding from the Navy to build a fence around the peninsula, and with additional support from IDNR, constructed a 400-foot long electrified fence to prevent human and other mammalian access to the island.

Initial numbers encouraged us: 49 adults, 54 nesting attempts and 109 eggs. Unfortunately, all eggs were destroyed and the suspected predators were rats.

By 2002, Brad Semel determined that a second fence needed to be built on the island itself, using a finer mesh to prevent rats from getting through.

This fence was likewise electrified.

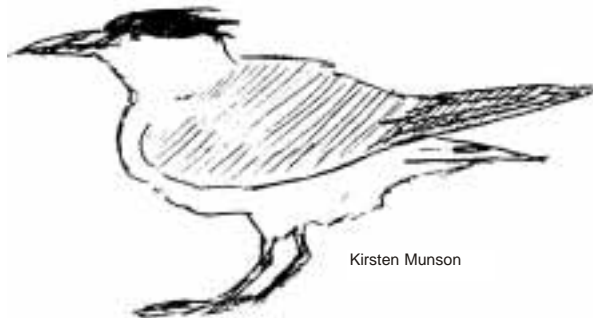
Danny Diaz, Dave Johnson, Brad and I also needed to clear aggressive plants from the island to make it tolerable for breeding.

All four of us monitored the site weekly throughout breeding season and the confirmed totals were 49 adults, 18 nests, 44 eggs and 26 fledglings. **More terns were produced this one year than in counts for the previous 23 years combined.**

I also want to note the importance of this location for other shorebirds. A Forster's tern was found nesting on the water's edge, just outside the inner fence. Regrettably, its eggs were predated.

Other birds sited here in recent years include curlew sandpiper, marbled godwit, American avocet, piping plover, Hudsonian godwit, and Arctic tern.

I extend my thanks to the many volunteers who have since helped clear brush, add sand and improve the site, the U.S. Navy, IDNR, Brad and Brandon Semel, Dave Johnson and Danny Diaz. If you are interested in the site, you may contact me at [donniebird@yahoo.com](mailto:donniebird@yahoo.com)



Kirsten Munson

## AUDUBON CAMP IN THE ROCKIES OFFERS NATURE STUDY

**TITLE: FIELD ORNITHOLOGY**  
(June 29 – July 5, 2003)  
**THEME: ECOLOGY BEGINS WITH BIRDS**

This field camp experience is intended for beginning and intermediate birders, educators and resource managers and stresses avian identification outdoors. The AVES method of bird identification, as it is called, was developed by Gene Wilhelm, former Vice President of Education, National Audubon Society, over decades of active birding. The concept is simple: remove oneself from the daily routine and responsibility of human endeavors, escape for a time to a milieu conducive to learning and immerse oneself in birding. The AVES method uses six keys in field identification: eye, ear, behavior, habitats, field marks and ecology during a period of intense but FUN AND EXCITING BIRDING with experts. The method works and the end result is a raising of consciousness of how birds interrelate and interconnect with the rest of nature in the dynamic ecological setting of Tensleep Nature Preserve. Experience

daily field identification sessions watching birds with experts in diverse Tensleep Nature Preserve habitats ranging from high mountain meadows and Ponderosa pine stands to lush canyon forests and wetlands to dry sagebrush steppes. These hands-on activities are linked to presentations and discussions, giving participants a richer awareness, understanding and appreciation of birds and ecology in the beautiful Big Horn Basin ecosystem. Led by nationally known ornithologists, this program has been developed for both novice and intermediate birders, educators and resource managers alike.

**TITLE: EARTH LITERACY**  
(July 6 – July 12, 2003)

**THEME:**  
**RESTORING CONNECTIONS:**  
**HUMANS WITHIN NATURE**

Natural history and the local environment once provided the basic foundation from which the education discipline emerged. Restoring those connections is what environmental education today is about and what makes it so compelling for cross-

curricula teaching in an outdoors setting. This weeklong experiential session is primarily intended for science and non-science educators who are either already incorporating environmental education into their lesson plans or would like to. Curious parents and guardians of elementary through high school age children also are welcome. Daily field trips in the beautiful and biodiverse Tensleep Nature Preserve, discussions, special presentation and projects, and many ideas and materials to take back home will guarantee a very special week.

### PRICING:

Early Bird registration (payment must be received by April 30, 2003) = \$875  
Late registration (payment must be received by June 15, 2003) = \$975  
Space is limited so early registration is encouraged. For more information or registration forms, contact **Audubon Wyoming at 307-235-3485.**

## COMPASS

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



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**Layout Artist:** Noël Maguigad

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

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# Land Use Debate Simmers in Springfield

by David Cohen

Conservation groups throughout Illinois are fighting to defend land protection programs in the first budget of the Blagoyevich Administration. The campaign comes at a moment when conservation funds are tightly stretched and a \$5 billion deficit in the budget threatens everything from public housing to library purchasing plans. Meanwhile, property development around the state continues to menace recreational space.

"We in Illinois need to do a better job of protecting open space," declares Mike McCurdy, a Chicago-based planner with the San Francisco-based Trust for Open Land. "Recreational space is being used up fast, and not just in the Chicago metropolitan area. It's happening in Champaign-Urbana as well as east of St. Louis."

A trio of conservation programs are being lobbied heavily in Springfield. The most endangered is the Open Land Trust, an initiative of former Governor Ryan and a top priority of the conservation movement. The Trust spent \$196 million in the Ryan years but expires when the state's fiscal year ends May 31st. The money came from general obligation bonds. Two other programs under pressure include the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Program (OSLAD) and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF). OSLAD and NAAF were initiated in 1985 and have a combined annual budget of \$20 to \$30 million. The funds come from the real estate transfer tax, a levy imposed on the transfer of property titles. Their budgets have been supported by the same trend that threatens the cause they advance—a hot property market.

"We know the Governor supports open space," said Lynn McClure, a spokesperson for the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD). "Coming from Chicago, he recognizes the need for this. Nevertheless, we don't expect these programs to be a priority like education." The IAPD, along with Chicago Audubon, the Sierra

Club, the Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy, are laboring to keep the programs intact. Research from the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Audit Committee indicates how poorly Illinois is protecting its land. In a seven-state Midwest region that includes Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, Illinois ranked last in recreational space owned by the state on a per capita basis. Measured in terms of recreational space owned by the state as a percentage of total acreage, Illinois also ranks low, besting last-placed Iowa by only one-tenth of one percent.

"People want bigger homes and bigger lots," laments McCurdy of the Trust for Public Land. "The trend in the last decade has been the expansion of residential and commercial properties. It's a product of low mortgage rates and the prosperity of the 1990s. But the boom is also depleting the supply of available land. It is being used up at a rate that exceeds population growth."

Not everyone is happy with the trend. "This issue resonates with voters," adds McCurdy, "and elected officials understand that. People see a sea of development. They see the changes that have occurred because of suburban subdivisions. They have a sense of loss and they want to protect what they can of the landscape."

In the last seven years, voters in the collar counties, including Will, Kane, DuPage, McHenry and Lake, have approved over \$400 million in bond measures supporting land acquisition, notes McCurdy. Cook County is a conspicuous exception. The Forest Preserve District has a land acquisition plan, but hasn't been able to fund it.

Jonathan Goldman, executive director of the Illinois Environment Council, finds general support for conservation spending in Springfield. Last spring, the General Assembly, rushing to pass related legislation, cut spending for OSLAD and NAAF in half. But a bill from the December 2002 veto session restored full funding to the initiatives and "passed overwhelmingly," Goldman notes. Governor

# Environmentalists Sue FCC

## Regulations on Communication Towers Demanded to Protect Migratory Birds

Environmentalists are suing the Federal Communications Commission to force it to protect the millions of migratory birds killed each year when they slam into communication towers.

The lawsuit, filed last week in federal court in Washington, D.C., targets towers that rise above 200 feet on land near the Gulf of Mexico, where many birds stop during spring and fall migrations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 5 million to 50 million birds die from flying into towers every year. They include some of the most endangered migratory songbirds, such as the black rail, Bell's vireo, the golden-winged warbler and Henslow's sparrow, according to conservationists.

The towers are used to keep cell phones, televisions, pagers and radios humming.

The American Bird Conservancy, Friends of the Earth and the Forest Conservation Council want the FCC to review the danger to birds before the towers go up, and want existing towers to use devices to keep the birds away, including high-pitched infrasound and colored lights.

Researchers said the towers' lights attract the birds. Most songbirds fly at night and orient themselves by the stars, but in bad weather they could

mistake tower lights for stars, said Thomas Sherry, a professor at New Orleans' Tulane University who specializes in bird migrations.

"Neither the companies which have constructed these towers nor the FCC has ever considered the serious harm these towers - both individually and cumulatively - have created for birds," said John Talbreth, conservation director at the Forest Conservation Council.

FCC guidelines require tower builders to weigh the risks to endangered species, but not migratory birds in particular, said Jeff Steinberg, FCC's deputy chief of the commercial wireless division.

The FCC would not comment on the lawsuit.

The cell phone industry said not as many birds are being killed as the conservationists claim.

"The evidence that is out there tends to be outdated and it's sort of unscientific," said Andrea Bruns, director of governmental relations for the Personal Communications Industry Association.

Bruns said she was disappointed the groups had sued, since progress had been made in talks with wildlife officials in recent years.

—Associated Press

Blagoyevich's first budget was formally introduced April 9th. The final version of the document is due by May 31st. Between now and then, Goldman says, spending will be shaped by negotiations between the Governor and the state's legislative leaders—House Speaker Michael Madigan, Senate President Emil Jones, House Minority Leader Tom Cross, and Senate Minority

Leader Frank Watson. Despite public support for conservation, a hostile spending environment makes political mobilization essential. Goldman urges Chicago Audubon members to contact their state legislators and press for support of environmental legislation. Updates on the political struggle will be posted on the IEC Web page—[www.ilenviro.org](http://www.ilenviro.org).



## 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: \_\_\_\_\_



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Stewardship Workdays

**At the Skokie Lagoons: May 10 and June 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, 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)

## Bird Walks

### Wooded Island

**Every Wednesday in May & June - 7:00 a.m.**

**Every Saturday in May & June - 8:00 a.m.**

Bring binoculars and field guides. Dress for the weather. Meet at the Darrow Bridge, just south of the Museum of Science and Industry.

**Note:** All the usual routes into the parking lot are closed. If you come

from the North, you must swing around the Museum at 57<sup>th</sup> St, continuing south on Cornell Ave. until you reach Hayes Drive (6300 South). At Hayes, turn left and get back on the Outer Drive going north. At 5800 South, turn left, and follow the road into the parking lot, proceed to where you are just north of the Darrow Bridge. If this isn't clear, please call Doug Anderson (773) 493-7058.

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

Meet in front of the Nature Center at 5801 N. Pulaski Road. Bring binoculars and field guides. For more information, call Don Klimovich (773) 878-4421.

### Saturday, May 3, 8:00 a.m. Rosehill Cemetery-Ravenswood Entrance

Join Audubon leaders for a morning of warblers, woodpeckers and ducks. Meet at the main entrance at Ravenswood and Rosehill Avenues. For more info call trip leaders Joe Lill (773) 631-3154 or Carol Nelson (773) 583-8616.

### Sunday, May 11, 8-10:00 a.m. Thatcher Woods Mother's Day Bird Walk in River Forest

The DesPlaines River Valley is a great place to see arriving spring migrants. Meet at the Trailside Museum parking lot west of the intersection of Thatcher Rd and Chicago Ave (south side). Call Stephen or Chris Lee for details (708) 485-8197.

### Saturday, May 17, 8:00 a.m. Spring Migrants at the Skokie Lagoons

We will bird the wooded area along the lagoons, usually excellent for spring migrants, as well as for birds that return and stay for the summer. Take I-94 to Willow Road. Exit east on Willow and meet in the parking lot on the north side of Willow just east of I-94. Call Doris Johanson for details (847) 299-3505.

### Saturday, June 7, 7:30 a.m. Bemis Woods Bird Walk

We'll be looking for and listening to nesting birds in Bemis Woods Forest Preserve along Salt Creek. In past years this area has been really good for certain nesting species. Target birds include bluebirds, hairy woodpeckers, scarlet tanagers, and blue-grey gnatcatchers.

Meet at the toboggan slide at South Bemis. The entrance to Bemis is on

Ogden Avenue, just west of the intersection with Wolf Road. This is in Westchester, east of the Ogden exit for the tollway (I-294). For more info, call Chris or Stephen Lee (708) 485-8197, or email at [stephenc@interaccess.com](mailto:stephenc@interaccess.com).

## Other Events

### Saturday, May 10, Cook County Spring Bird Count

Call Duane Heaton to register and for details (847) 358-5856 or [dheaton@xnet.com](mailto:dheaton@xnet.com).

## 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. Contact Joe

Lill at (773) 631-3154 or

[trptjoe@aol.com](mailto:trptjoe@aol.com) for more

information.

## You are Invited to enjoy a morning at the future McCormick Place Bird Sanctuary and Prairie!



Over 200 different kinds of migrating birds pass through our neighborhood every spring and fall. We will witness this magnificent bird migration and discuss the future transformation of the underground parking structure into a nature oasis.

**Who:** Family, friends, young and old are welcome to enjoy nature in the city.

**What:** A day to bird watch, learn about the new sanctuary, and hear your thoughts on how to make the prairie a success.

**When:** May 3, 2003 from 9:00-10:30am

**Where:** We will be on the south side of the McCormick Place Lakeside Center, near the bike path along the lake. **Free parking** is available at McCormick Place in the garage off of 31<sup>st</sup> street and Lake Shore Drive. Just exit 31<sup>st</sup> street, drive up Fort Dearborn Drive into the parking garage and say you're with Audubon!

Please join us in learning about this extraordinary new sanctuary on Chicago's lakefront where we are planning restoration work and education programs for the years to come. This special project was made possible with help from Prince Charitable Trust, Urban Resource Partnership, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Gap Community Organization, community members and volunteers. It is sponsored by Audubon - Chicago Region, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and The Chicago Park District.

Please contact Shelly Britton at 847-965-1150 or [sbritton@audubon.org](mailto:sbritton@audubon.org) with any questions or if you need to borrow binoculars for the event.



### Nature Buffs — Enjoy a Unique Vacation

No place like it. Haven for nature lovers—look to the outdoors to see or study nature. Very private, lush forest. Virgin pines over 275 years old. Crystal clear lake. Hike, swim, fish. 3 cabins furnished for 4 persons each. 270 miles north of Chicago. Available by the week, Sat. to Sat., Memorial to Labor Day. For details and reservations, write or call private owner: R.R. Roth, 531 Forestview Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068; 847 823 4785.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

The Chicago Audubon Society is looking for new Board members. If you are a conservation-minded individual who is willing to attend one meeting a month, and participate in events as a volunteer and/or leader, we would love to hear from you. If you know of someone who would like to be considered for the Board, or are interested yourself, please call the President, Chris Lee at (708) 485-8197.