



DECEMBER 2023 – JANUARY 2024

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY



A chapter of the National Audubon Society

Wild Turkey
Meleagris gallopavo

Turkeys travel in flocks and search on the ground for nuts, berries, insects, and snails. They use their strong feet to scratch leaf litter out of the way. In early spring, males gather in clearings to perform courtship displays. They puff up their body feathers, flare their tails into a vertical fan, and strut slowly while giving a characteristic gobbling call. At night, turkeys fly up into trees to roost in groups. Wild Turkeys live in mature forests, particularly nut trees such as oak, hickory, or beech, interspersed with edges and fields. You may also see them along roads and in woody backyards. After being hunted out of large parts of their range, turkeys were reintroduced and are numerous once again.

nwilaudubon.org

The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society celebrates the diversity in nature and among the people and communities with whom we work. We are dedicated to providing an inclusive, welcoming, and judgement-free atmosphere where people of all experience levels, identity groups, and cultural backgrounds are actively encouraged to participate.

NIAS MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Most programs are held the first Tuesday of the month (Sept.-May) at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd., Freeport and begin at 7 p.m., followed by refreshments. All programs and events are open to the public.

Check the current newsletter or our website for specific monthly details, special events or any changes to the usual time and place.

PLEASE JOIN US!

Please note: schedule and location of programs are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please see newsletter and website for up-to-date information.

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

2. Calendar Considerations, Programs, Events and Field Trips
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7. Thank You!

About Bird: birds.cornell.edu
(top) Steve Voght (middle) Program photos provided by the presenters



HIDDEN PRAIRIE: PHOTOGRAPHING LIFE IN ONE SQUARE METER

Presented by Chris Helzer

Tuesday, December 5th, 2023
Program 7:00 pm

Zoom (from home) or in-person at St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL

HYBRID PROGRAM: All members of Northwest Illinois Audubon Society (that we have emails for), will receive the zoom link the week before the program. If you are not a member, we want you to join us for this great program, but you need to email nwilaudubon@gmail.com to receive your Zoom link.

In 2018, ecologist and photographer Chris Helzer embarked upon a project to highlight the beauty and diversity of prairies at a small scale. He marked out a single square meter plot in a small restored prairie in Aurora, Nebraska, and visited the plot numerous times during the year with his camera. The photos and stories that emerged from that square meter of prairie formed the basis of a book, a museum exhibit, and many presentations.

In this particular presentation, Chris will share many of the photos from that project, along with the tales of both his experience and the species he photographed. He'll also talk about how his focus on such a small area changed the way he now explores and photographs nature. Prepare to be inspired to look more closely at the world around you!

Chris Helzer is Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska, where he conducts research and evaluates prairie management and restoration work. He is also dedicated to raising awareness about the value of prairies through his photography, writing and presentations. Chris is author of The Prairie Ecologist blog, and two books: The Ecology and Management of Prairies in the Central United States and Hidden Prairie: Photographing Life in One Square Meter. He is also a frequent contributor to NEBRASKALand magazine and other publications. Chris and his family live in Aurora, Nebraska.

BIRDS AND BEAUTY IN ARIZONA

Presented by Richard Benning

Tuesday, January 2, 2024
Program 7:00 pm

St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL

In April of 2023, the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society hosted a long distance field trip to Arizona with participants boarding the Amtrak train in Princeton, IL to travel to Flagstaff, AZ spending time at Cave Creek and Ramsey Canyon. Our speaker



will share photos and stories about birding at these locations along with stories and photos about insects, mammals, reptiles, and blooming plants in the deserts of Arizona. Enjoy photos of the hummingbirds of Arizona including the

Broad-billed, Anna's, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, and Rivoli's. The desert was filled with blooming Owl's Clover, lupine, Pink Penstemon, Poppy, Mariposa and Apricot Mallow.

CALENDAR

PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

P **December 5** – Monthly Program: Hidden Prairie: Photographing Life in One Square Meter, 7:00 p.m. (see cover for details)

O **December 16** – 48th annual Christmas Bird Count

P **January 2** – Monthly Program: Birds and Beauty in Arizona, 7:00 p.m. (see cover for details)

F **January 13** – Field Trip: Open Land Birding, 9:00 a.m. - noon (see adjacent column for details)

F **January 30** – Field Trip: Open Land Birding, 9:00 a.m. - noon (see page 3 for details)



- M** Meeting
- F** Field Trip
- S** Stewardship
- P** Program
- E** Event
- O** Other



November 6th – NIAS 50th Anniversary Program

(top) An extensive selection of pies photo by Kara Gallup

(below) photos by Dan Barron

OPEN LAND BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, January 13

Tuesday, January 30

9:00 a.m. - noon

Coordinator: *Mary Blackmore*
815-938-3204

Carpool from the Harbor-Freight lot (east side) in Freeport at 9 a.m.

We will carpool and cruise country roads in local areas that were historically prairie. Viewing will be done predominantly from vehicles, using the cars as blinds, and communicating by radio.

Typically we'll see several species – notably Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur and Horned Lark – on roadsides or in fields, often in abundance if there is adequate snow cover. Snowy Owls have been spotted in past years. Other species we'll search for include Rough-Legged Hawk, Northern Shrike and Merlin. Of course we'll enjoy any bird we see, including our many year-round residents. **Please call Mary to confirm your attendance.**



PRESERVES OVERSEEDING

Seeds of selected prairie species will be overseeded at both our Elkhorn and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserves in December. While much of our annual seed collection is spread in areas after an early spring burn at Elkhorn Creek, certain species require longer periods of wet cold conditions and/or their habitat is not on the spring burn schedule. Additionally a planned late fall burn at Silver Creek will create good conditions for overseeding.

Since this activity is weather dependent, we'll use our stewardship contact list to notify interested volunteers. To get on the list call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or e-mail Kathy Weber at nosyturtle@gmail.com. We will try to provide as much notice as possible.



**October 10 – Field Trip:
Maquoketa Caves State Park**

photo by Chris Kruger

SUCCESSFUL BIRDSEED SALE

Great weather, wonderful volunteers and supporters, and loyal customers came together resulting in another successful birdseed sale fundraiser. We distributed over 15 tons of product. Our profit of over \$5,700 will be used to fund our many programs, activities and publications.

The sale would not have been possible without our team of dedicated volunteers who participated in seed distribution and delivery, ear corn bagging, flier creation and mailing, order processing and much more. Many thanks go to Lynn Feaver, Chris Kruger, Tim and Teresa Smith, Mary Blackmore, Chris Fye, Judy Corrie, Rex Sides, Karl Bronn, Merry Blake, Jeff Shriver, Don Miller, Gary Gordon, Paul Brown, Bob Wittenbeck, Nancy and Randy Ocken, Anne Straight, Mike Wilson, Laura and Doug Dufford, Dan Barron, Richard Benning and Juliet Moderow. Special thanks go to the Birdseed Sale Committee – Tim Smith, Chris Kruger and Mary Blackmore – for their many hours of planning, coordinating and follow-up.

Many thanks go to the folks at O'Mara Transport Company for not only providing our main pickup site, but also using their forklift to assist us in staging the many pallets of seed. Thanks also go to Audubon members who hosted our regional pickup sites: John and Kay Day, Anne Straight,



A few members of the birdseed crew (L to R): Judy Corrie, Mary Blackmore, Jeff Shriver, Richard Benning and Tim Smith | photo by Chris Kruger

Chris Kruger and Jeremy Dixon. Additional thanks go to Randy and Nancy Ocken for donating ear corn and to Cub Foods of Freeport for donating bags for the corn.

Be sure to remember the money-back guarantee stated in the sale flier. If you discover any seed spoilage or incorrect seed type(s) in your bags, call Mary at 815-938-3204 and we will provide you with a refund.

There are a few extra bags of seed available for purchase. To inquire call Chris at 815-238-9259.

Thank you again to everyone – including Mother Nature – who contributed to the success of this major fundraiser!



Juliet Moderow is a recipient of the 2023 Dutcher Award

presented by the National Audubon Society in recognition of her diversity and equity initiatives in Northwest Illinois. She was presented the award on November 4 during the Audubon Leadership Conference held in Estes Park, Colorado.

Marshall Johnson, Chief Conservation Officer presenting the William Dutcher award to Juliet
Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

OCTOBER PROGRAM REVIEW, JEN WALLING. I. E. C.

The NIAS October program was presented by Executive Director of the Illinois Environmental Council, Jen Walling. It was an excellent one on many levels. Jen in my opinion is the perfect leader for an organization like the Illinois Environmental Council. She is so very knowledgeable, quick witted, passionate, patient, caring, well-spoken and the list goes on and on and on. (Jen's amazing professional bio can be found in the last NIAS newsletter). For those not familiar with IEC, its mission is to "bring together the Illinois environmental community to influence decision makers and ensure clean air, clean water and healthy communities." I cannot begin to tell you all they do, so please check out them out on their website, ilenviro.org.

If you need a refresher civics course or are looking for a comprehensive list of action items they are working on and the progress made on them, it is all there on their webpage. One can also review our state representatives' voting records on environmental issues by visiting the Illinois Environmental Council's website (IEC scorecard) IEC Scorecard - Illinois Environmental Council (ilenviro.org) One can view federal representatives' voting records by visiting the League of Conservation Voters scorecard League of Conservation Voters Scorecard (lcv.org).

A year ago, Candy Colby wrote a great article for the NIAS newsletter about the importance of voting. We truly can make a difference in voting for candidates that favor what NIAS and IEC stand for and believe in. But what happens when the election smoke has settled down and the voting is in? It does not really matter which candidate is elected at that point; they will need our education on environmental issues. WE need to call them, email them, text them, send letters or postcards. We

need to let them know we care and that we are watching. WE also need to THANK them when they have voted in favor of a bill that helps the environment. All our representatives' numbers and addresses are found in the newsletter and on the NIAS webpage.

The Illinois Environmental Council does have a comprehensive legislature update on their webpage too. It is too lengthy to put in this article, so again I ask that you go to their site and explore all their information about bill progress. (<https://ilenviro.org/category/legislative-updates/>) One will find some good news such as the following list of bills focused on reducing plastics pollution in Illinois. The following is taken directly from their webpage.

The Illinois General Assembly wrapped up the 2023 session in late May by passing several bills addressing plastic production and reduction; improving reuse systems; and providing better data to assist future policymaking:

SB 58 bans the state from purchasing polystyrene foam foodware. Styrene, a building block of polystyrene, is likely a human carcinogen, creating health risks in production, use and disposal. Additionally, polystyrene is not recyclable, increasing the challenges of an overburdened waste system by plastic pollution. The bill also requires all state agencies to develop plans to reduce purchasing of single-use plastic.

SB 1715 will increase the number of bottle-filling water fountains across the state, providing no-cost water for many more people and decreasing reliance on single-use water bottles that contribute to plastic pollution.

HB 20086 will allow customers to refill their own containers with ready-made food at restaurants and retailers. Increasing reusable systems is the most effective and efficient way to reduce plastics and associated greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a safe, circular economy.

SB 1563 requires the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to report on the potential impacts of microplastics in drinking water in Illinois.

SB 1555 requires the Illinois EPA to create a statewide needs assessment for packaging and paper products. This is a critical step towards establishing comprehensive extended producer responsibility in Illinois focused on holding producers accountable and achieving source reduction.

It seems overwhelming the work that our representatives are overseeing. It seems overwhelming for an organization like IEC to be the watchdog for the environment for us. It is overwhelming for us to try to keep track of it all. IEC is there to help guide us and educate us. I suggest, just as in our everyday lives, we find where our passion lies and make the difference you can. It will be appreciated by this generation and the following ones. Let us protect those that do not have a voice, guide the people that make the laws and defend the systems that keep us all alive!

– Don Miller



◀ **In mid-October Anita Nienhuis donated a bench in memory of her husband John, which was placed at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve.**

photo by Jeremy Dixon

September at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve ▶

Seed collection and *Gentiana puberulenta* (Prairie Gentian) | photos Teresa Smith



2023 BIRDATHON FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

This year's May Birdathon raised over \$3,200. Those funds were distributed to organizations that work to protect birds and the habitats they rely on. Our chapter retained 30% of the funds raised to assist with our many programs and activities.

Many thanks go to both the Birdathon birders and individuals who sponsored one or more birders. Their generosity provided much needed funds for bird protection projects in both wintering and nesting areas, as well as migration routes.

We all look forward to the 2024 Birdathon on May 5!

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED INCLUDE:

- Northwest Illinois Audubon Society
- National Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative
- The Bird Protection Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin
- Belize Audubon Society
- Stewards of the Upper Mississippi
- Sand Bluff Bird Observatory

Birdathon  **44 YEARS**
Your money goes where the birds go

MEMBERSHIP TYPES FOR GETTING AND GIVING

With each newsletter we include a membership form that can be used for new national memberships or for local only memberships. It is a great time of year to share your love of Audubon with family and friends by providing a gift membership. **Check out the form on the last page of this newsletter.**

WE OFFER TWO TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP:

National membership supports the National organization, costs \$20 and includes the quarterly Audubon magazine from National Audubon as well as all the mailings and newsletters from Northwest Illinois Audubon Society for 1 year. If you are a National Audubon Society member you do not need to also join at the local only level.

Local only membership which costs \$15 includes just the mailings from Northwest Illinois Audubon Society for 1 year but does not include the quarterly Audubon magazine from National Audubon.

While we are able to process new National Audubon Society membership applications, we are NOT able to accept renewals for National Audubon Society at the local level. All renewals for National Audubon Society must be mailed to National Audubon or you can renew on the National Audubon website.

If you are wondering when your current membership is expired **you can find it on the address label on this newsletter if you are a National Audubon member.**

If you are a local only member you receive a card in the mail one month prior to the expiration of your local only membership.



BEGINNING BIRDER CLUB

THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH – THROUGH APRIL!

Freeport Public Library, Youth Services Program Room
10:30 a.m. to approximately 12:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

This club is full, but you can register to be placed on the waiting list.

Contact *Juliet Moderow*
at *moderowja@gmail.com* or phone
201-233-0946 to get on the waiting list.



Education Chair, Juliet Moderow, has a Beginning Birder Club from September through April.

► TOPICS:

- **December 16, 2023** – Bird movement: We will learn more about feathers, how birds fly, why some birds migrate and others do not.
- **January 20, 2024** – Birds of prey: We will learn about birds of prey and do an owl pellet dissection.
- **February 17, 2024** – Bird reproduction: We will learn about bird reproduction, egg laying, nest building, etc.
- **March 16, 2024** – Bird banter: We will learn about how birds sing and learn songs/calls of common birds in the area.
- **April 20, 2024** – Bird Conservation & Being a Birder: We will learn about how to protect birds and how to be a birder!

This will be a fun, educational program for youths to learn about different topics about birds. Lessons will be tailored for ages 6-10, but younger/older children and youth are welcome. An adult must be present with the youth during the entire program. All sessions are independent from each other, so you are welcome to attend any that you are able.

Each program will be held at 10:30 am to approximately 12:00 pm on the third Saturday of the month. Sessions will be held at the Freeport Public Library in the Youth Services Program Room, but we will try to end the session outside to look for birds. Please dress appropriately for the weather as well. Registration required.

Welcome New Members!

Carl Trank – Forrester (Corrected)
Betsy Kroeger – Baileyville
Michael Nelson – Freeport
Art Donart – Thomson



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

It's time once again for the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count. This will be the 48th time that our chapter has taken part in this endeavor to take one-day snapshots of types of bird species and numbers of each in approximately 2500 count circles throughout the Western Hemisphere. Our local count day is planned for December 16, 2023.

Field counting will be done the same way as last year in that the local compiler will assign territories to count participants. Those who were field counters last year will be contacted by the local compiler. If someone has not been a field counter in the past, and is interested in becoming one this year, please call the local compiler.

Observations at bird feeders are an important part of Christmas Bird Count data. To be a feeder counter you must be within our official count circle which extends seven and one-half miles out from its center in Read Park in Freeport. The information below tells about being a feeder counter and includes a form to fill in with your observations.

Anyone who wishes to be a feeder counter, or has questions about this year's Christmas Bird Count, should call the local compiler, Richard Benning at 815-865-5279.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FEEDER COUNT PARTICIPATION

Participating in the CBC as a feeder counter can be a rewarding way to be a citizen scientist. Your observations will be included with our local data. You must be sure that your feeders are in our official count circle which is described above. If you are not sure that you meet this requirement call Richard Benning at the number listed above. You must do your counting on the day of our local count, December 16th.

It is asked that you spend at least a cumulative (not necessarily all at once) two hours doing your feeder observations on the day of the count. You don't have to be glued to the window watching every bird for every minute. Just check your feeder often during the hours you are counting. Then complete the form included here and mail it as indicated. Each species that you observe should include the largest number of that species seen at any one time. For example, if you see eight juncos at 8:30 a.m. and eleven juncos at 9:45 a.m. the number you should record is eleven because that is the largest number of juncos seen at any one time.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

<input type="checkbox"/>	Mourning dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	American Tree Sparrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-headed Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Song Sparrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-bellied Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-throated Sparrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	Downy Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-crowned Sparrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hairy Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-eyed Junco
<input type="checkbox"/>	Northern Flicker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Northern Cardinal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Jay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple Finch
<input type="checkbox"/>	American Crow	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Finch
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-capped Chickadee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pine Siskin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tufted Titmouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	American Goldfinch
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-breasted Nuthatch	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Sparrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	White-breasted Nuthatch	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brown Creeper	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)
<input type="checkbox"/>	European Starling	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)
<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)
<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)
<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	(other)

MUST BE COMPLETED ON DECEMBER 16TH

Please mail form to: Richard Benning, P.O. Box 11, Davis, IL 61019
NO LATER THAN December 21st THANKS!

Would you like to join Audubon as a NEW Member or give a GIFT membership? *Two types of membership are available:*

1. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and National Membership
includes this local newsletter, local mailings and the national "Audubon" magazine.

_____ National Membership \$20

All renewals for national memberships need to use the national membership form.

2. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society Local only Membership
includes this newsletter and other mailings from our local chapter.

_____ Local Only \$15

Name of new member or gift recipient _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

If this is a gift membership, please indicate the name of the person providing the gift membership:

Name _____

Make check payable to **NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY** and mail to:
Treasurer, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032

BOARD MEMBERS

President | Richard Benning
Vice-President | Steve Simpson
Secretary | Tim Smith
Treasurer | Mary Blackmore

Board members At-Large:
Elizabeth Boettner, Jeremy Dixon,
Kathy Weber, Gay Brooks,
Pam Richards, Carol Beatty,

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership | Jeff Shriver
Programs | Teresa Smith
Conservation | Laura Dufford
Education | Juliet Moderow
Publicity | Leah Dixon
Field Trips | Chris Kruger
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (adhoc)
Juliet Moderow and Gary Gordon

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815-541-3261 | dan@driftlessflora.com

nwilaudubon@gmail.com

rev 5/23



THANK YOU!

Recent financial donations: Darrell Windle, Betty Mickel, Nancy Gmitro and Barbara Williams

Lynn Feaver for mowing firebreaks at both our preserves.

Jeremy Dixon for repairing Elkhorn Creek's wooden bridge and donating labor to construct and place the John Nienhuis memorial bench.

Recent field trip and event leaders: Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore and Juliet Moderow.

Volunteers for and supporters of our annual Birdseed Sale Fundraiser. (see page 3)

Tim Smith for winterizing our mower, and for removing downed trees from the trails at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Anne Straight and Mary Blackmore for providing supplies for our campfire s'mores.

Nancy and Randy Ocken for hosting our preserves volunteer potluck and discussion.

Mary Blackmore for organizing the campfires at our preserves.

Shey Lowman for creating the activity calendar every two months for our website.

Fall seed collecting volunteers at both preserves: Anne Straight, Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore, Teresa Smith, John Gvozdjak, Paul Brown, Kathy Weber, Pam Richards, Nancy Ocken, Judy Corrie, Bernard Lischwe and Merry Blake.

Recent donations in memory of Harlan Corrie: Paul Brown, Tim and Teresa Smith, Laura Dufford, Mary Blackmore, Kara Gallup and Judy Corrie.

Juliet Moderow for moderating our ZOOM Audubon name discussion.

Carol and Fred Redmore for providing refreshments and hospitality, and Mary Blackmore for moderating our live Audubon name discussion.

NIAS 50th Anniversary Celebration pie makers: Teresa Smith, Kathy Weber, Anita Nienhuis, Mary Blackmore, Juliet Moderow, Kara Gallup, Paul Brown, Fran Shriver, Laura Dufford and Pam Richards.

Illustrations by Carol Litus

**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS
AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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ADDRESSES/EMAILS OF YOUR LEGISLATORS

Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 • State House Switchboard (217) 782-2000

*When using the state switchboard simply ask to be connected to the legislators office.
When using the capitol switchboard follow the series of prompts.*

FEDERAL

Senator Richard Durbin

230 S. Dearborn, Suite 3892,
Chicago, IL 60604
www.durbin.senate.gov/contact/

Senator Tammy Duckworth

230 S Dearborn Suite 3900,
Chicago, IL 60604
312-886-3506
www.duckworth.senate.gov/connect/

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100 NE Monroe Street, Room 100,
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309-671-7027 | <https://lahood.house.gov/>

17th District Rep. Eric Sorenson

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<https://sorensen.house.gov/>

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