



A chapter of the National Audubon Society

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS BIRD AND NATURE ALLIANCE



APRIL – MAY 2026

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance celebrates 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, abilities, identity groups, and cultural backgrounds are actively encouraged to participate.

Scan QR to visit



nwilbirdnaturealliance.org

NIBNA MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Most programs are held the first Tuesday of the month (September through May) at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd., Freeport and begin at 7:00 p.m., followed by refreshments. All programs and events are open to the public. The building is fully accessible.

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
3. Field Trips, Programs and Events
4. Spring Stewardship, Birdathon
5. Birdathon Pledge, 2025-2026 Ballot
6. Christmas Bird Count Report Book Discussion
7. Spring Migration
8. Annual World Migratory Bird Day
9. Thank You!

Feature Bird Photo by: Terry Sohl, sdakotabirds.com
Information from allaboutbirds.org

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) | One of the earliest-arriving migrant warblers, the Black-and-white Warbler's thin, squeaky song is one of the first signs that spring birding has sprung. This crisply striped bundle of black and white feathers creeps along tree trunks and branches like a nimble nuthatch, probing the bark for insects with its slightly downcurved bill. Though you typically see these birds only in trees, they build their little cup-shaped nests in the leaf litter of forests across central and eastern North America.

43RD ANNUAL BANQUET

BANQUET RESERVATIONS DUE BY MARCH 21ST

**Botanical Humor:
You Never Knew Plants
Were So Funny**
Presenter Chris Benda
(a.k.a. Illinois Botanizer)



Tuesday, March 31 at Highland Community College Student Conference Center | Freeport, IL

Silent Action at 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. • Meal at 6 p.m. • Speaker at 7:30 p.m.

Chris Benda has been teaching about plants for over 12 years and during that time has developed a unique teaching style that includes lots of puns, jokes, and whimsical pop culture references. The program is sure to keep you entertained and equipped with fun ways to learn about plants and teach others about plants.

The event includes a silent auction that features nature related items with proceeds from the auction used to support activities at the Chapters two preserves, Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

The banquet includes a full turkey or vegetable lasagna dinner with delightful desserts for \$32 for adults (kids 12 and under are free). The meal will be served at 6:00 p.m. with the program following the meal. The deadline for reserving your meal for this event is March 21st, however reservations are not necessary to attend the program (no meal). The cost for the program only is \$5 for adults with no charge for children and students. Further details about the banquet including the registration form can be found nwilbirdnaturealliance.org or by calling Teresa at 815-238-3963.

CAUGHT ON TRAIL CAMERAS:

Exploring Wildlife Activity on Natural Land Institute Preserves
Presenter Grace Wieland

Tuesday, May 5th at St John's Church, Freeport, IL
Potluck at 6:00 p.m. • Program at 7:15 p.m.



We will start the evening with a delicious potluck meal. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. NIBNA will provide beverages. After the meal, there will be some brief announcements with the program to follow at approximately 7:15.

Grace Wieland will summarize the findings of her yearlong trail camera project. She deployed a collection of trail cameras on two Natural Land Institute sites to compare wildlife activity and species presence on private and public lands throughout different seasons. Come out and see what animals she found and what might be in your neighborhood. Grace Wieland is the Field Biologist at the Natural Land Institute. She graduated in 2023 from the UW-Stevens Point with a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management. We consider ourselves lucky to have her back in our area!

CALENDAR

P **March 31** – 43rd Annual Banquet (see page 1 for details)

E **April 1** – 2026 Boyer Colloquium hosted by Highland Community College

F **April 2** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **April 6** – Field Trip: Blooming Pasque Flowers at the Freeport Prairie, 2-3 p.m. (see page 3 for details)

F **April 10** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **April 16** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

O **April 18** – 2026 Midwest Annual Crane Count (see adjacent for details ▶)

S **April 22** – Earth Day Preserves Roadside Clean-up, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (see page 3 for details)

E **April 23** – Conservation Committee Book Discussion (see page 6 for details)

F **April 24** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **April 29** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **May 1** – Field Trip: Mississippi Palisades State Park (see page 3 for details)

E **May 3** – Annual Birdathon Fundraiser! Your pledge is MOST welcome! See page 6 for our list of birders and for details about making your pledge that will help birds on their wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting habitats.

P **May 5** – Monthly Program (see cover for details)

F **May 7** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

E **May 9** – Annual World Migratory Bird Day, Co-hosted with University of Illinois Extension and Freeport Public Library (see page 3 for details)

O **May 9** – Spring Bird Count (see below)

M **May 12** – Board meeting at St. John United Church of Christ at 7:00 p.m.

F **May 14** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **May 18** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

E **May 21** – Wild Geranium Campfire at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. We will take a leisurely stroll at 7 p.m. to observe resident birds and the expansive Wild Geranium bloom in the south woods. The campfire will start at 7:30. S'mores will be provided. Bring a lawn chair, flashlight and water (if desired). Call ahead to Bob and Kara Gallup (815-871-8014) if you would like ATV transport from the parking lot to the campfire circle.

The preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.) The preserve parking lot is just off of Leaf River Rd. If the weather is questionable, call Mary at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281. Carpool from the Harbor Freight east parking lot in Freeport at 6:15 p.m.

F **May 27** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 4 for details)

F **May 29** – Field Trip: An Evening of Birding at Lost Mound, 5:30-9:30 p.m. (see page 3 for details)



Illustration by Carol Litus

BE PART OF CITIZEN SCIENCE: CALLING ALL CRANE COUNTERS

Saturday, April 18 is the Annual Midwest Crane Count and Stephenson County has over 12 sites that are monitored each year as part of the Crane Count. Participants are on site from 5:30-7:30 am to listen and watch for cranes. It is a great way to participate in a citizen science project and enjoy the early morning sights and sounds.

Notify Teresa Smith at 815-238-3963 by April 4th if you are interested in participating in this event.

Experienced and blossoming birders are encouraged to participate. No experience with crane counting is necessary! If you are new to the Crane Count you will be partnered with an experienced counter who can help you to learn more about cranes. Inexperienced counters can also learn more about cranes on the International Crane Count website savingcranes.org

After the Crane Count, we will enjoy breakfast together at a restaurant in Freeport and share stories from our early morning birding experience.

SPRING BIRD COUNT: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

This year's Stephenson County Spring Bird Count will take place on **Saturday, May 9th**. NIBNA is looking for volunteers. Do you live in Stephenson County? Or are you willing to drive there? Compiler Carol Beatty is looking to divide up the county to make sure we cover as much as possible, especially the hotspots! We always welcome feeder counters, but this year there is a need for more field counters. If you can help with this important Citizen Science effort, either as a field counter or a feeder counter, contact Carol Beatty at cjbeatty17@gmail.com or 630-284-1134. If you have a favorite area of Stephenson County, let Carol know and she will do her best to split the county so we can get the most coverage. Thank you in advance!



VIEW OUR CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS AT:
nwilbirdnaturealliance.org/news/calendar/

M Meeting

F Field Trip

S Stewardship

P Program

E Event

O Other



FIELD TRIPS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

TICK AVOIDANCE

As ticks typically are active in April and May, we recommend that you use tick avoidance strategies for all spring outings.

An easy method is to wear socks long enough to tuck your pant legs into, followed by using insect repellent from the knees down. Both socks and pants should be light-colored for easier tick detection, and always do a tick check when you get home.

Blooming Pasque Flowers at the Freeport Prairie

Monday, April 6, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281

Join us as we admire one of the prairie's harbingers of spring, the Pasque Flower. Unlike the crocus which it resembles, a Pasque Flower, *Pulsatilla patens*, is a member of the buttercup family. In early spring the plant sends up a flower stalk in advance of leaves so what you see are delicate pale violet blooms nestled in the muted tan tangle of last year's prairie grasses. Come and see how Pasque Flower blooms actually move to track the sun.

The Freeport Prairie is an Illinois Nature Preserve located on Freeport's south side.

NOTE: Meet in the preserve's new parking area off of Meadows Dr., adjacent to the northwest corner of the prairie. Enter through the curb cut which will be flagged for better visibility. If the weather is questionable, call Mary.



February 17th Field trip to Nicholas Conservatory | photo by Juliet Moderow

Earth Day Preserves Roadside Clean-up

**Wednesday, April 22,
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281

Carpool from the Harbor Freight lot in Freeport at 9:30 a.m.

Join us as we commemorate Earth Day by picking up litter on the roadsides of both our Elkhorn Creek and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserves. Both preserves have about half of their boundaries along roads, and the more heavily trafficked ones produce considerable roadside trash. We'll have orange vests for visibility, plenty of bags for trash and recyclables, and work gloves. Meet in the parking area at Elkhorn Creek at 10 a.m. Bring a sack lunch, insect repellent and water. After our clean-up along Freeport and West Grove roads, we'll head east to Silver Creek, stopping first at Mary Blackmore's home to eat our lunches and for a bathroom break. At Silver Creek we'll work along West Grove and Leaf River roads. Everyone is welcome to help for only morning, only afternoon, or both. As with most roadsides, the ground is uneven and sometimes steep.

If weather is questionable, call Mary.

Mississippi Palisades State Park

**Friday, May 1st
8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Carpool from the Harbor Freight lot in Freeport at 8:30 a.m.

Coordinator: Richard Benning
815-865-5279

(PLEASE CALL TO SIGN UP)

You can join the carpool in Freeport at 8:30 a.m. or meet us inside the park's south entrance at 9:30 a.m.

Take this opportunity to hike in scenic rugged beauty and experience the wildflowers and geology of this beautiful location. Depending on blossom timing we could see several species of Trillium,

Virginia Bluebells, Shooting Stars, Mayapples and more. The complex ancient story of Ordovician limestone and dolomite will be right before our eyes. Wear sturdy shoes, and be forewarned that some sections of trail are steep, narrow and uneven. Bring a sack lunch. We will plan on eating at the park right after the hike. You can join the carpool or meet us inside the park's south entrance at 9:30 a.m.

An Evening of Birding at Lost Mound

Friday, May 29, 5:30-9:30 p.m.

Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281

Carpool from the Forreston municipal lot on the south side of the village library along HWY 26 at 5:30 or meet the group in the parking area of the Fish and Wildlife office building (see directions below) at 6:30 p.m.

Join us as we travel along side sand prairies and sand savannas near the mighty Mississippi in search of birds in the Lost Mound Unit of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge just north of Savanna. Of primary interest will be the awesome courtship display of the Common Nighthawk, as well as vocalizations of both Eastern Whip-poor-wills and American Woodcocks. There will be enough time to observe many of the grassland species of songbirds as well.

Directions for meeting at Lost Mound: Turn left to enter the refuge off of HWY 84, about 9 miles north of Savanna. After crossing railroad tracks, drive up the hill to the intersection and turn right. Drive about .5 mile and turn left into the parking area. There is a restroom in the parking area.

We'll car-caravan from the parking lot traveling the paved roads and do little or no walking. The timing sequence will be songbirds, Common Nighthawk, American Woodcock and at the end, Whip-poor-wills. If you want to leave the caravan for an earlier departure you may do so.

If the weather is questionable, call Mary.

SPRING STEWARDSHIP AT OUR PRESERVES

We invite you to join us on one or more of our Spring Stewardship Sessions as we work together to reduce the numbers of Wild Parsnip, Garlic Mustard, Multiflora Rose and honeysuckle on our Silver Creek and Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserves. Early removal means not only cooler working temperatures for us, but also less biomass to handle.

Spring stewardship is especially rewarding. In addition to the enjoyable conversations with fellow volunteers and more comfortable temperatures, we get to experience a lot of "firsts": first amphibian call, first leaf-out or bloom of various plants, and the first sights and sounds of returning birds. The fresh air and exercise are added bonuses. The efforts of every volunteer is very much appreciated!

Considering both the unpredictability of plant emergence times and the increasing wild fluctuations in spring weather, we're going to use our contact list to notify volunteers of each work session in April and May. We'll do our best to provide as much advanced

notice as we can. If you're available, please join us; if not, we hope you can join us another time. To get on the contact list email Elizabeth Boettner at elizabethjboettner@gmail.com or call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281.

Each session will be 2 hours long and could be morning or afternoon, depending upon the temperature. Tools, guidance and snacks will be provided. Volunteers should bring gloves, water and insect repellent. Be sure to wear a hat, long sleeves, long pants (light-colored is best) and socks long enough to tuck your pant legs into (for tick avoidance). **If weather becomes questionable contact Mary as noted.**

Our Elkhorn Creek preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. Our Silver Creek preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.), with parking just off of Leaf River Rd.



Girdling at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. (L to R) Mary Blackmore, Sarah Barron. | Photo by Dan Barron

Birdathon

Your money goes where the birds go

This year, our chapter marks its 47th year of sponsoring a BIRDATHON fundraising event! In that time, thousands of dollars have been raised for bird conservation. Please join us in making this year's effort our best yet!

We invite you to make a pledge to any of the birders listed on the form to the right who will be participating in our chapter's annual BIRDATHON on May 3rd. Your pledge, for instance 15¢, will be per SPECIES of bird that your selected birder(s) identifies on that day. Your birder will contact you after the count with their species total and collect your contribution.



Your money indeed goes where the birds go! All BIRDATHON proceeds are shared by organizations that do a tremendous job of:

- protecting and improving bird habitat
- on wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting sites,
- connecting people with nature,
- providing education opportunities for the public, and
- collecting scientific data through bird counts and birdbanding.

THOSE ORGANIZATIONS ARE:

- Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance**
- National Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative**
- Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin**
- Belize Audubon Society**
- Stewards of the Upper Mississippi**
- Sand Bluff Bird Observatory**

Please complete the pledge form (INSERT) ► and mail as indicated. THANK YOU so much for your support of birds and our BIRDATHON!

2026 BIRDATHON PLEDGE FORM

Name

Phone

Address

City

State Zip

Email

**I am pledging _____¢ per species seen
by that (those) birder (s) marked below:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Jesse Akins	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gary Gordon
<input type="checkbox"/>	Richard Benning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dylan Lewis
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mary Blackmore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kent Lewis
<input type="checkbox"/>	Judy Corrie	<input type="checkbox"/>	Laura Dufford
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jeremy Dixon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juliet and Willow Moderow
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wyatt Dixon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bernard Lischwe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teresa Smith	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kara and Bob Gallup
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anne Straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	

CLIP AND MAIL to Mary Blackmore, 9024 W. West Grove Rd., Forreton IL 61030 or include your pledge form with your chapter ballot mailed to NIBNA, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032. Questions? Call Mary at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281

2026–2027 BALLOT FOR NIBNA CHAPTER OFFICERS

The individuals listed below have been nominated to serve on next year's NIBNA Chapter Board of Directors in the positions indicated. Please vote in the spaces provided if you support the nominated candidates, or insert and vote for write-in candidates if that is your wish. All Board terms, except for President, are for one year.

Elected Officers

PRESIDENT

Laura Dufford Write-in _____

VICE PRESIDENT

Jeff Shriver Write-in _____

SECRETARY

OPEN Write-in _____

TREASURER

Tim Smith Write-in _____

MEMBERS AT LARGE *(vote for six)*

Elizabeth Boettner Jeremy Dixon
 Kee Henze Kara Gallup
 Bernard Lischwe Esther Schippers
 Write-in _____

Standing Committee Chairs *(appointed)*

Conservation | Juliet Moderow **Programs** | Carol Beatty
Education | OPEN **Publicity** | Sarah Barron
Membership | Gay Broocks
Field Trips | Mary Blackmore

Send your ballot to NIBNA, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032 before April 15. Results will be announced in the next newsletter and the new Board will assume its duties in mid-May.

CONTROLLED BURN AT ELKHORN CREEK BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE

(2/25/26) • Photos and information by Pam Richards

It's very important to prepare for the prescribed burn in advance. Jim and Tim walk and survey the trails and topography, remove barbed wire and dead trees, then brush-cut and rake debris off the firebreaks. Teresa helped also. A detailed burn plan is then created. They consult with Mary who is involved with the plan.

The 'mop up' when all volunteers check the scene for smokers such as the one Tim is chain sawing and Jim is water spraying. Great job!



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORT



The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance participated in the 126th running of the Christmas Bird Count on December 20, 2025. This was the fiftieth time that our chapter has contributed data for this endeavor. The CBC is the longest running citizen science project in the world. The database is held by the National Audubon Society and is used to analyze trends in bird numbers and distribution during the non-breeding season in North America.

This database can be accessed at christmasbirdcount.org

There are approximately 2,500 count circles in the Western Hemisphere, with most of them in the United States and Canada. There are over sixty count circles in the state of Illinois alone. Our count circle is centered in Read Park in Freeport and is fifteen miles in diameter. This circle has remained constant during the fifty years of our participation.

We tallied a total of 6,285 birds, representing 51 species, on our count day.

The number of birds is about 1,300 more than last year, but below the median for the last ten years. The number of species is the most ever in the fifty year history of our count. Twenty field counters and eight feeder counters helped to gather data on count day. Bird species for which we observed a higher than normal number this year include Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Bluebird, White-crowned Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Bird species with lower than normal numbers observed include Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting and American Tree Sparrow. Year to year fluctuations are to be expected in CBC data due to variables which cannot be held constant. The weather and viewing conditions on count day are major variables that have an effect on what is seen and what is not seen. Long term trends are what CBC data is most valuable for.

Thank you to the following individuals for helping with this year's count. Field observers were Carol Beatty, Richard

Benning, Mary Blackmore, Paul Brown, Judy Corrie, Jeremy Dixon, Leah Dixon, Mason Dixon, Wyatt Dixon, Doug Dufford, Laura Dufford, Kara Gallup, Gary Gordon, Mary Pat Gordon, Laura Keith-Schwartz, Anita Nienhuis, David Nienhuis, Teresa Smith, Tim Smith and Anne Straight. Feeder counters were Allen Backus, Julie Beach, Ken Beach, Megan Bennehoff, Judi Deszcz, Somer Elgin, Janet Graves and Lurane Slaght. Special thanks to Tim Smith for storing our CBC data in digital format.

Attached is a list of species observed on count day and the number of individuals for each species. *Accipiter sp* means the observer was unable to ascertain whether it was a Sharp-shinned Hawk or a Cooper's Hawk, so it does not count as a separate species.

Richard Benning
CBC Compiler, Freeport Circle

126th Christmas Bird Count Species:

- Canada Goose 639
- Mallard 9
- Ring-necked Pheasant 6
- Wild Turkey 29
- Great Blue Heron 1
- Northern Harrier 1
- Sharp-shinned Hawk 1
- Cooper's Hawk 8
- Accipiter sp 1
- Bald Eagle 26
- Red-shouldered Hawk 1
- Red-tailed Hawk 50
- Rough-legged Hawk 2
- Ring-billed Gull 1
- Rock Pigeon 523
- Eurasian Collared-Dove 19
- Mourning Dove 213
- Belted Kingfisher 3
- Red-Headed Woodpecker 14
- Red-bellied Woodpecker 49
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 4
- Downy Woodpecker 62
- Hairy Woodpecker 12
- Northern Flicker 36
- American Kestrel 14
- Merlin 1
- Blue Jay 130
- American Crow 207
- Horned Lark 50
- Black-capped Chickadee 72
- Tufted Titmouse 9
- Red-breasted Nuthatch 5
- White-breasted Nuthatch 49
- Brown Creeper 1
- Winter Wren 1
- Carolina Wren 1
- Eastern Bluebird 41
- American Robin 40
- European Starling 1694
- Cedar Waxwing 21
- American Tree Sparrow 110
- Fox Sparrow 1
- Dark-eyed Junco 469
- White-crowned Sparrow 16
- White-throated Sparrow 11
- Song Sparrow 2
- Northern Cardinal 102
- Red-winged Blackbird 1
- House Finch 139
- American Goldfinch 92
- House Sparrow 1186
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow 110

Conservation Committee Book Discussion

The Conservation Committee invites everyone to the next book discussion on April 23 at 1 p.m. at Higher Grounds in Freeport. We will be discussing Bill McKibben's latest book "Here Comes the Sun: A Last Chance for the Climate and a Fresh Chance for Civilization."

McKibben, a long-time environmental activist and author, was one of the first to sound the alarm about the climate crisis. In his latest book, he asserts that the present moment is also full of possibility. Energy from the sun and wind is now the

cheapest power on the planet and growing faster than any energy source in history. The challenge is to keep accelerating the pace of transition.

Here Comes the Sun tells the story of the sudden spike in power from the sun and wind—and the efforts by the fossil fuel industry and their politicians to slow the transition to clean renewable energy. McKibben gives us an overview of how we arrived at the present moment with the burning of fossil fuels, how wind and solar actually work and reviews the present

danger we face with climate change. He addresses the common questions and doubts we hear when talking about transitioning to renewable energy – can we afford it, can poor nations afford it, do we have enough land, do we have the materials we need – and provides compelling affirmative answers based on facts.

McKibben tells many inspiring stories - from the everyday citizens who installed solar panels equal to a third of Pakistan's electric grid in a year to the world's ►

ENJOY THE SPRING MIGRATION

From the first Killdeer singing on a crisp February day to the last Bobolink checking out nesting sites on a sunny May morning, the spring migration is a phenomenon of wonder. Truly, as many have said, this never gets old! Every year our chapter schedules spring bird walks to leisurely observe, enjoy and learn about these migratory species and the habitats they pass through or stay to nest in. These walks are suited for beginning or experienced birders and everyone in between. All are welcome!

Among the many highlights of last year's walks were a 10-warbler-species site (including a Golden-winged Warbler), displaying Bobolinks, Tufted Titmice and Sandhill Cranes, and close looks at Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Orchard Oriole, Northern Waterthrush, Rusty Blackbird and many more.

Expected trail conditions are described in each outing below. Restrooms are not available unless noted. We've resumed carpooling from the Harbor Freight east parking area on Freeport's south side adjacent to the McDonald's along HWY 26. For walks where there is a carpool option, the departure time is indicated.

All of the walks will begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 11 a.m. Feel free to join or depart the group anytime during those three hours. Those who wish to will gather for lunch afterwards at a nearby restaurant. If the weather is questionable or you need further directions to the site, please call the listed leader. We hope you can join us!

► fourth-largest economy, California, nearly halving its use of natural gas in the last two years. He traces the arrival of plentiful, inexpensive solar energy and shows how solar power is more than just a path out of the climate crisis: it is a chance to reorder the world on saner and more humane grounds.

"Here Comes the Sun" gives us an inspiring vision for a new civilization to be built: one that looks up to the sun, every day, as the star that fuels our world.

*Submitted by Candace Colby,
Conservation Committee*

April 2 – Wetland Areas of Eastern Stephenson County. This outing has little walking as we drive to each wetland area and often view the birds from our vehicles. Carpool at 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281)

April 10 – Duck's Misery and the southern Jane Addams Trail. During most of this outing we are walking on the level, hard surface of the Jane Addams Trail. Some observations will be made from the shoulder of Winneshiek Rd. Carpool at 7:40 a.m.

Leader: Laura Dufford (815-541-8958)

April 16 – Northern Jane Addams Trail and the Orangeville Wetlands. Walking will be on the hard, level surface of the Jane Addams Trail. Restrooms are available at the trailhead in Orangeville where we begin. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Somer Elgin (815-275-0719)

April 24 – Newell Tract, Oakdale Nature Preserve, Freeport. Some parts of the trail are steep and the ground can be uneven. Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract, the part of Oakdale on the west side of Crane's Grove Rd. Restrooms are available in the parking area.

Leader: Anne Straight (706-248-9344)

April 29 – Pecatonica River Forest Preserve (main entrance by the campground). A special bonus of this walk will be stunning wildflowers and perhaps singing frogs! Trails have some steep portions and the surface can be uneven. Restrooms are available in the parking area. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

May 7 – NIBNA Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, rural Forreton. We'll walk the mowed trails through grasslands, woodland and wetlands. The trails have some steep sections and the ground is often uneven. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281)

May 14 – Harry and Dorothy Espenscheid Forest Preserve northeast of Freeport. A variety of habitats will be explored including forest, savanna and the riparian areas of Rock Run Creek. There are a few steep portions of the mowed trail and the surface can be uneven. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

May 18 – Krape Park, Freeport. We'll meet in the parking lot by the dam and walk the paved path along Yellow Creek and then on some of the road shoulder downstream from the paved path. Restrooms are in the park.

Leader: Juliet Moderow (201-233-0946)

May 27 – NIBNA Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve and the Bald Hill Prairie, rural Leaf River. We'll walk the mowed trails (uneven ground in some places) of Silver Creek's woodlands and grasslands. For the last hour we will visit the nearby Bald Hill Prairie where we should be treated to displaying Bobolinks. Carpool at 7:15 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Marjorie Nichols - Apple River
Richard Bonjour - Cedarville
Kay Handel - Chadwich
Diane Jackovich - Dixon
Petera Norman - Freeport
Rosemary Flikkema - Lanark
Joseph Czurylo - Lanark
Mark Ellena - Leaf River
Catherine Rambo - Morrison
Samuel Boelens - Polo
Kerrylyn Whalen Rodriguez
– Freeport
Fred Smith - Savanna
Jeff Andersen - Savanna
Ryan Hance - Stockton
Mike Kennedy - Rockford

ANNUAL WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY EVENT

Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!

Co-hosted with University of Illinois Extension and Freeport Public Library

Saturday, May 9
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Oakdale Nature Preserve
4433 S. Cranes Grove Rd.
Free and open to the public.

Join us for a fun, family-friendly event at Oakdale Nature Preserve. This location provides wonderful opportunities for finding birds! We will have activities for all ages and abilities. In an open-house style event in and around the Oakdale Pavilion, we will have many hands-on activities including crafts, games, birdwatching, and an obstacle course that fits this year's theme. We will have giveaways while supplies last.

On each hour at 10:15 a.m. 11:15 a.m., and 12:15 p.m., there will be three outings to take the trails to bird watch. Please meet at the Pavilion to join one of these outings led by NIBNA members. We will ensure that the accessible trail be used for each of these outings before taking other trails. Oakdale Nature Preserve also provides accessible parking and restrooms. There are benches along many of the trails. Please wear appropriate footwear for the trails. Bring binoculars if you have any and we will have some available to borrow. This is a rain or shine event and hope to have plenty of shelter in case of rain. World Migratory Bird Day 2026 is highlighting the important role of

community science in bird conservation. The Environment for the Americas (EFTA), a non-profit organization that has been coordinating International/World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) since 2007, focuses their effort on the flyways in the Americas and strives to educate the public about migratory birds and ways to conserve them. Although their efforts are ongoing throughout the year, WMBD is a special celebration celebrated in May and October in each of the hemispheres. Every year, a new global theme is determined and this year the focus is about sharing spaces with birds. All over the world, people celebrate migratory birds and are united by the same theme, to create a central message and promote the urgency for conserving and protecting migratory birds.

The theme for World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2026, "Every Bird Counts – Your Observation Matter" highlights the role of public participation in collecting data on migratory bird populations and their habitats and factors that impact their populations and contribute to our knowledge about how to protect them. Community science, ranging from backyard bird counts to large-scale coordinated surveys/schemes, provide information on species distribution, abundance trends, migration timing, and breeding success. This data is important to identify conservation priorities, and



inform effective conservation action plans and strategies. By engaging individuals and communities in monitoring efforts, we not only gather scientific data but also build a deeper connection to nature, raise awareness about the challenges migratory birds face, and inspire direct conservation action.

This theme will particularly resonate as it coincides with and will leverage promotional materials and visibility from a significant shorebird count happening in 2026, showcasing real-world application of monitoring efforts. It will also highlight other programs that involve the public and benefit bird conservation.

Information provided by:

migratorybirdday.org

2026 BOYER COLLOQUIUM

Hosted by
Highland Community College
Wednesday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m.

Room H-201, Student Conference Center
or via Zoom™

What are the Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Data Centers

Explore generative artificial intelligence's environmental, economic, and ethical impacts in Illinois. Generative artificial intelligence is transforming how we work and create. But what does it mean for Illinois' energy use, economy, and public policy?

Join a moderated panel exploring:

- The environmental footprint of Artificial Intelligence
- Energy production and usage in Illinois
- Economic implications and infrastructure demands

- Ethical responsibilities and public policy considerations
- Featured Panelists
- Steve Stadelman - Illinois State Senator, 34th District Chair, Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
- Scott Vogt - Principal, Vogt Energy Advisors
- Jeremy Monigold - Information Technology Instructor, Highland Community College

For more information or to obtain the Zoom link, visit:

highland.edu/boyer-colloquium

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

1. Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance 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 Bird and Nature Alliance 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 Bird and Nature Alliance** and mail to:
Treasurer, NIBNA, P.O. Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032

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rev 5/25

THANK YOU!

- Winter overseeding volunteers at both preserves: Judy Corrie, Kara Gallup, Paul Brown, Mary Blackmore and Bernard Lischwe.
- Morgan and Mary Blackmore for trail checking and limb removal at both preserves.
- Jim and Pam Richards for removing downed fencing at Elkhorn Creek.
- Tim and Teresa Smith and Jim and Pam Richards for fire break preparation at Elkhorn Creek.
- Mary Blackmore, Richard Benning, Chris Kruger and Juliet Moderow for leading recent field trips and events.
- Sarah Barron for designing the new kiosk posters for our preserves.
- Jeremy Dixon for repairs on the Elkhorn Creek wooden bridge, for installing the new kiosk posters and replacing a damaged blue bird box.
- Nancy and Randy Ocken for hosting our February potluck and discussion for preserves volunteers.
- February 25 prescribed burn volunteers at Elkhorn Creek: Jim and Pam Richards, Tim Smith, Bernard Lischwe, Richard Benning, Paul Brown, Randy Ocken, Jerry McCormick, Kara Gallup, and Mary Blackmore. Special thanks go to Jim for creating the burn plan and bossing the burn.
- Thank you to Colleen Wilson for the financial donation.
- Shey Lowman for donating binoculars, magnifying lenses, and compasses for use in youth outdoor education programs.

COOKIES, BARS, CAKES, OH MY!"

Our monthly meetings are full of new and wonderful topics and an added treat to these meetings is...an added treat! Many thanks to our wonderful bakers who donate goodies for our after-meeting community time.

We appreciate you! Bakers for Fall of 2025 and Spring of 2026 are: Judi Deszcz, Debbie Barron, Amera Striegel, Fran Shriver, Allison Gush, Anne Straight, Mary Blackmore, Don Miller, Gay Broocks, Patty Weik, Kara Gallup and Pam Richards.



**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS
BIRD AND NATURE ALLIANCE**

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