A chapter of the National Audubon Society

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS BIRD AND NATURE ALLIANCE

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2026

Red-shouldered Hawk *(Buteo lineatusz)* | Whether wheeling over a swamp forest or whistling plaintively from a riverine park, a Red-shouldered Hawk is typically a sign of tall woods and water. It's one of our most distinctively marked common hawks, with barred reddish-peachy underparts and a strongly banded tail. In flight, translucent crescents near the wingtips help to identify the species at a distance. These forest hawks hunt prey ranging from mice to frogs and snakes.

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. Fall Seed Collecting, Seed Processing
5. Nesting Boxes, Conservation Committee
6. Let's Talk Data Centers
7. Thank You!

Feature Bird Photo by: Eastern Wood-Pewee Macaulay Library
Information from allaboutbirds.org

BATS OF ILLINOIS

Presenter: Abby Pagels

Tuesday, October 6th
Program at 7:00 p.m.

St. John United Church of Christ
1010 S. Park Blvd | Freeport, IL

Join us for an informative discussion on the Bats of Illinois, with Abby Pagels of the Illinois Bat Conservation Program. Learn about basic bat biology, interesting facts, benefits of bats, and threats to bats (both local and world-wide). Find out more about the Illinois Bat Conservation Program (https://www.illinoisbats.org), what they do, how they study bats, and how they use that data to help conserve our bats here in Illinois.

If the weather is right, Abby can demonstrate the acoustic recorder to see if we can pick up any bat calls in real time in the parking lot! This is sure to be a fun and educational presentation, so please join us!

THE GEOGRAPHY OF GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION

Presenter: Jim Giocomo

Tuesday, November 10th
(NOTE: CHANGE FROM REGULAR MEETING NIGHT)
Program at 7:00 p.m.

St. John United Church of Christ
1010 S. Park Blvd | Freeport, IL

From Illinois prairies to Texas grasslands, the future of grassland birds depends on a conservation network that stretches far beyond any one backyard, state, or organization. The Geography of Grassland Bird Conservation explores how conservation organizations, large partnerships like Partners in Flight and Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, and individuals including landowners and private-lands biologists connect the dots—turning continental bird priorities, science, and partnerships into action on the ground. Along the way, we'll see how what happens on a Texas ranch can matter to birds passing through an Illinois prairie, and where local birders and bird groups fit into this surprisingly interconnected conservation system.

Jim Giocomo, the Central Region Director for the American Bird Conservancy, is based in Durand IL, and will take us on this journey.

CALENDAR

October 3 – Field Trip to Sand Bluff Bird Observatory. You must register before September 27! *(see page 3 for details)*

October 6 – Monthly program, Bats of Illinois by Abby Pagels *(see page 1 for details).*

October 8 – Prairie Seed Collecting at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 2-4 p.m. Tools, snacks and guidance provided. Bring water, gloves and insect repellent.

The preserve is about 2 miles south of Leaf River in the southwest corner of the intersection of Leaf River Rd. and West Grove Rd. The parking lot is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. crosses HWY 72 in Leaf River and becomes Leaf River Rd.). If the weather is questionable, call Mary at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281. For information on more seed collecting opportunities, see the article on page 4.

October 9 – Conservation Conversation *(see page 5 for details)*

October 11 – Fully Accessible Bird and Nature Event *(see page 3 for details)*

October 15 and 16 – NIBNA annual Birdseed Sale Fundraiser – deliveries and Freeport pickups at O'Mara Transport Company.

October 17 – NIBNA annual Birdseed Sale Fundraiser – Stockton, Forreston, Davis and Dakota pickups only.

October 22 – Let's Talk Data Centers: 6:00 p.m. *(see page 6 for details)*

October 26 – Full Moon Campfire at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Stroll the trails to observe plants and animals at 5:30 p.m.; the campfire follows at 6:00. S'mores will be provided. Bring a lawn chair, flashlight, insect repellent and water.

The 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. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281.

October 29 – Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 1-4 p.m., *(see page 4 for details).*

November 8 – Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 1-4 p.m. *(see page 4 for details)*

November 10 – Monthly program, The Geography of Grassland Bird Conservation by Jim Giocomo *(see page 1 for details).*

November 21 – Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 9 a.m. - noon, followed by a potluck lunch *(see page 4 for details)*

VIEW OUR CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS AT:

nwilbirdnaturealliance.org/news/calendar/

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

▲ *Mary Blackmore "predators" an award-winning Parsnip. photo by Kara Gallup*

FALL PRESERVES STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship will be scheduled on shorter notice by using our volunteer contact list. To get on this list call Mary Blackmore at (h) 815-938-3204, (c) 779-302-7281 or e-mail Elizabeth Boettner at elizabethjboettner@gmail.com. We will try to provide as much notice as weather permits. We plan to focus on honeysuckle and Multiflora Rose removal as well as trail-trimming at both preserves. We work for only 2 hours, with a break mid-way. Volunteers should always feel free to depart early if needed.

Volunteers should wear long pants, long sleeves and a hat. Bring water, insect repellent and gloves. Snacks, equipment and guidance will be provided.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Colleen Brecon- Dixon
Donald Kessel - Dixon
Beatric Martinson- Dixon
Colleen Logsdon- Dixon
Lana Myzia - Freeport
Cathleen Varner - Freeport
John Nelson - Lanark
Emily Brandon - Morrison
Peter Latino - Orangeville
Betty Townsend - Pearl City
June Schafer - Polo
Jennifer Burkholder - Polo
Debra Eddinger - Rock Falls
Jane Koeppen - Rock Falls
Robert Dorival -Savanna
Gary Kloepping - Shannon
Peter Upitis - Stockton
Aleta Vian- Thomson
Bruce Sikkema - Thomson

FIELD TRIPS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Bird Banding at the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory

Saturday, October 3
7:30 a.m. - noon

Registration required before Sept. 27 call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or 779-302-7281

Join us as we observe the bird banding process at Sand Bluff. From net extraction, to identification and banding, to release, it is all fascinating to see! Since we will visit the nets, be sure to dress accordingly: long pants that can tuck into socks, long sleeves and a hat. Bring insect repellent. Beverages and snacks will be provided.

We will carpool from the Freeport Harbor Freight east lot at 7:30 a.m., or you can go directly to Sand Bluff. We plan to return to Freeport by noon.

The Sand Bluff Bird Observatory has been a recipient of a portion of our Birdathon funds for many years. This trip is a great opportunity to see those donations in action!

Again, be sure to register before September 27 by calling Mary at the above number(s).

TICK AVOIDANCE

As ticks are active in our area, we recommend that you use tick avoidance strategies for all 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.

Fully-Accessible Bird and Nature Event

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance, in partnership with RAMP, is hosting our third annual Accessible Birding Event to celebrate Birdability® week. The Stephenson County Health Department will also host a table.

Sunday, October 11
from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Krape Community Building (near the boat ramp) within Krape Park, 1799 Park Blvd, Freeport, IL 61032

This is a FREE, open-house style event - come for part or the entire time. This event is fully accessible. All individuals and families and people of all ages are welcome to attend. All abilities are welcome! The event is free. Rain or Shine!

The Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education will have a "meet and greet" for their birds of prey during the entire event. We will have a Slow Birding outing, also known as Mindful Birding, at 1:15 and 2:15 using paved trails from the Community Building. During these Slow Birding outings, we will also have Ken Beach on hand to show us some tree identification! Throughout the event, we will have a Bird Sit, focusing on birding by audio and using binoculars while stationary outside. We will have arts and crafts with Jaime Elliott. We will have some snacks & giveaways as well.

This event celebrates Birdability® week, created by an organization whose mission is to ensure inclusivity in Birding. According to their website, Birdability® Week is an annual celebration dedicated to birders with disabilities and other health concerns. It serves as a platform to share resources and ideas, fostering an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming birding community. Inspired by other inclusive celebrations such as #BlackBirdersWeek, Latino Conservation Week, and Let's Go Birding Together, Birdability® Week aims to ensure that birding is a joyful and enriching experience for everyone.

Learn more at birdability.org!

RAMP DISABILITY RESOURCES & SERVICES

RAMP is a non-profit, non-residential Center for Independent Living (CIL) that emulates the Independent Living Philosophy with a mission to build an inclusive community that encourages individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential.

Learn more at rampcil.org

Migrating Waterfowl on the Mississippi

Saturday, November 14
12:30-5:00 p.m.

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

We'll start our trip south of Savanna at Spring Lake Wildlife Area to view migrating waterfowl, hopefully including Tundra Swans. With luck we'll also observe wading birds and perhaps a late migrating shorebird or two. American White Pelicans are virtually guaranteed! Several more stops will be made along the river before arriving at our last site, Lock and Dam #13.

Carpool from the Forreston municipal lot off of HWY 26 at 12:30 or meet us at Spring Lake at 1:30. Please confirm your attendance by calling Mary.

▲ *Many thanks to presenters Rich and Marion Miller, for their September program "Chimney Swifts: Well "Sooted" for their Job" | photo by Juliet Moderow*

▲ **ECBP** – *Seed collecting at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve | photo by Teresa Smith*

FALL PRAIRIE SEED COLLECTING

Every September and October we collect prairie seeds at our preserves for planting in less diverse and more disturbed areas of those same sites.

TWO SEED COLLECTING OUTINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED:

September 12 at Elkhorn Creek
10:00 a.m. – noon

October 8 at Silver Creek
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

We plan to have many more collecting opportunities as weather permits, using our contact list to notify volunteers. To get on this list, e-mail Elizabeth Boettner at elizabethjboettner@gmail.com or call Mary Blackmore at (h) 815-938-3204, (c) 779-302-7281. We will provide as much notice as possible.

No experience? No problem! Seed collecting is an easy, leisurely task. Novices are always welcome. There will always be one or more leaders to point out which plants to pick seed from. Equipment and snacks are provided. Typically we collect for a two-hour period of time in late morning or afternoon.

Note: Some seed collecting will be done on trailsides, but much of the collecting will be done off-trail. Be aware that the terrain is often steep and/or uneven and that we'll be walking through tall grass.

Be sure to wear long pants, long sleeves and a hat. Please bring water, gloves and insect repellent.

Schizachyrium scoparium
Little Bluestem

PROCESSING SEEDS FROM OUR PRESERVES

Join us for prairie seed processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed on October 29 from 1-4 p.m., November 8 from 1-4 p.m., and November 21 from 9 a.m. - noon. For many years the Nienhuis family generously has provided this great set-up with many tables for our work, delicious snacks and, if needed, a toasty fire in the woodstove.

Seed processing is easy and fun; no experience is necessary. It's sort of like a botanical quilting bee, with lots of good conversation.

Dust masks will be provided (or bring your own) since we raise considerable dust while rubbing seedheads across screens. All mint species will be processed in an outdoor workspace.

Our traditional potluck will be held at the conclusion of our work on November 21. Bring a dish to pass and table service. Be sure to RSVP to Anita at 815-443-2401.

Directions to the Nienhuis home at 3350 S. Mill Grove Rd., Pearl City: Take Pearl City Rd. west from Freeport for about 7 miles. Turn left (south) on Block Rd. In a little over 1 mile turn left (south) on Mill Grove Rd. The Nienhuis driveway is on your right, less than ½ mile down Mill Grove Rd. and is directly across from the entrance to a campground.

▲ *October 2024, Prairie seed processing team at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed. | Photo by Peter Happ*

Lespedeza capitata
Round-headed Bush Clover

2026 ELKHORN CREEK NEST BOXES

2026 was one of our best years for Eastern Bluebird reproduction. This was due, in part, to the total absence of Eurasian Tree Sparrows (ETS), our historic nemesis and an incredibly persistent nest box competitor. We have no idea why they were nowhere to be seen, when last year they attempted to nest in 5 of the 9 boxes, a consistent rate for many years. Whatever the reason, hooray for the bluebirds!

Bluebirds had 8 broods in 4 boxes, with 7 broods successful, resulting in 28 fledged young. We determined that the failed brood was due to House Wren predation.

Northern House Wrens had 3 successful broods in 3 boxes, resulting in 12 fledged young. There was no evidence of Tree Swallow nesting attempts.

Many thanks go to our nest box monitoring volunteers, Kara Gallup and Mary Blackmore, for their weekly (or more) monitoring visits from late February through early September.

▲ *(top) Chrysemys picta (Painted Turtle) | (lower) Rudbeckia laciniata (Cut-leaf Coneflower) | Photos by Patty Weik*

▲ *August Field Trip Group: Molly Doolittle, Judy Corrie, Anne Straight, Patty Weik, Paul Brown and Mary Blackmore photo by Don Miller*

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

As the new chair of the Conservation Committee, I wanted to try a couple of new ways to stay engaged in Conservation issues.

1) Action Alerts – I will be sending Action Alerts via email at least once a month but also more frequently if there is something more urgent. If you are not already on the email list for NIBNA, please send us an email and we will add you. I hope that by sending you a list of manageable action alerts, you can take a quick moment to fill out the forms easier or know exactly who to call. Together we can make a bigger impact! If email is not your thing, don't worry! I will also share "Action Alerts" in person at the public meetings as well.

2) Conservation Conversations – let's TALK about it. Lately, many people experience something called Ecological Grief, where we experience great emotion when witnessing the changes of the ecosystem around us. I'll try to have a short agenda or topic to keep us on task, but let's talk about what is going on at that time, locally or larger, and talk about it. Hopefully we can also have a plan of action at the end.

I would like to offer the first one outside with a backup space planned just in case.

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Friday, October 9 at 2:00 p.m. at Oakdale Nature Preserve.

We will meet at the shelter and chat. Please contact me (Juliet) at 201-233-0946 or nwilbirdnaturealliance@gmail.com and let me know if you are coming in case we need to move to an indoor location (likely Freeport Public Library).

– Juliet Moderow

LET'S TALK DATA CENTERS:

Please join the Environmental Study Group (ESG) for a presentation on data centers to be held at the Freeport Public Library on Thursday, October 22 at 6:00 p.m.

ESG is partnering with Prairie Rivers Network, Citizen's Utility Board and the Sierra Club to offer this presentation to help inform citizens regarding the proliferation of massive, resource-intensive "hyperscaler" data centers across the country and powering the boom in generative artificial intelligence. Many questions have been raised regarding data centers' energy use and the impact on utility bills, water use, noise and air pollution, and problems with transparency in informing residents of potential developments.

Participants will learn about the state-wide expansion of data centers, problems associated with them, and pending legislation known as the POWER Act, which would regulate data centers in Illinois, requiring them to build their own renewable energy, among a number of other requirements. Please plan to attend to learn about this important subject and how we can get involved.

▲ *Data center in Loudon County, Virginia. (planetdetroit.org) | Photo: Hugh Kenny*

▲ *NIBNA Board members gathered at St. John United Church of Christ in July to discuss topics and initiatives which will carry our organization through the 2026-2027 term and into the future. | Photo by Dan Barron*

The Peace of Wild Things

Wendell Berry
August 5, 1934 – August 31, 2026

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

From Openings: Poems (1968)

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

BOARD MEMBERS

President | Laura Dufford
Vice-President | Jeff Shriver
Secretary | Kee Henze
Treasurer | Tim Smith

Board members At-Large:

Kara Gallup, Bernard Lischwe, Esther Schippers, Elizabeth Boettner, Jeremy Dixon

President Emeritus | Teresa Smith

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion *(ad hoc)*
Juliet Moderow and Gary Gordon

Newsletter Layout | Dan Barron
815-541-3261 | dan@driftlessflora.com

nwilbirdnaturealliance@gmail.com

rev 5/26

THANK YOU!

- Butterfly Festival volunteers who provided equipment and refreshments, helped with set-up and take-down, staffed the hospitality area, led butterfly tours, provided informational materials on butterflies and helped with identification of insects, plants and birds: Richard Benning, Juliet and Willow Moderow, Alan Branhagen, Tim and Teresa Smith, Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore, Chris Kruger, Laura Dufford, Pam Richards and Judy Corrie. We really appreciate the work that you did!
- Stewardship volunteers at both preserves in July and August: Teresa Smith, Judy Corrie, Kara Gallup, Emily Elmore, Charlotte Wenzel, Nancy Ocken, Juliet Moderow, Mary and Morgan Blackmore, Anne Straight, Pam and Jim Richards, Dan and Sarah Barron, Paul Brown, Bernard Lischwe and Merry Blake.
- Recent field trip event leaders/ coordinators: Juliet Moderow and Mary Blackmore.

▲ *Buckeye Butterfly | Photo by Mary Blackmore*

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE THROUGH NIBNA

One of our chapter purposes is to engage in educational activities that promote habitat and wildlife preservation. NIBNA has scholarships available consistent with this purpose. Scholarships are offered for educational opportunities for students of all ages. Recipients of the scholarship are determined by the board and the amount awarded is based on the application request amount and available money in the budget. In 2025, Kee Henze was awarded a scholarship to help offset the costs of attending the National Audubon Hog Island camp.

Contact us at: nwilbirdnaturealliance@gmail.com to inquire about scholarship availability.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS
BIRD AND NATURE ALLIANCE
P.O. Box 771
Freeport, IL 61032-0771

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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.

rev 3/25

FEDERAL

Senator Richard Durbin
230 S. Dearborn, Suite 3892
Chicago, IL 60604
309-786-5173 | durbin.senate.gov/contact/

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

16th District Rep. Darin LaHood
527 Colman Center Drive
Rockford, IL 61108
779-238-4785 | lahood.house.gov/

17th District Rep. Eric Sorenson
2401 4th Ave., Rock Island IL 61201
779-513-4960 | sorensen.house.gov/

STATE

45th District Sen. Andrew Chesney
50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001
Freeport, IL 61032
815-232-0774 | senatorchesney.com

34th District Sen. Steve Stadelman
State of Illinois Building
200 S Wyman Suite 301
Rockford, IL 61101
815-987-7557 | senatorstadelman.com

37th District Sen Li Arellano
86 South Galena Ave Suite 2
Dixon, IL 61021
779-251-5003 | senatorli.com

90th District Rep. John Cabello
1702 Hutchins Road
Machesney Park, IL 61115
815-974-0090 | cabello@ilhousegop.org

89th District Rep. Tony McCombie
9317B IL Route 84
Savanna, IL 61074
815-291-8989
mccombie@ilhousegop.org

74th District Rep. Brad Fritts
101 W 1st Street Suite 501
Dixon, IL 61021
815-561-3690 | fritts@ilhousegop.org

67th District Rep. Maurice West
303 N Main Street Ste 110
Rockford, IL 61101
815-987-7433
assistance@StateRepWest.com

Note that many elected officials no longer have an email address (with an @ sign) but instead prefer to be contacted via their website listed and using the "Contact Us" option.