



In Flight

Newsletter of McHenry County Audubon • Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society



December 2012

Annual Meeting

Cougars, Wolves and Bears - Oh, My! The Return of Large Predators to Illinois Speaker: *Chris Anchor*

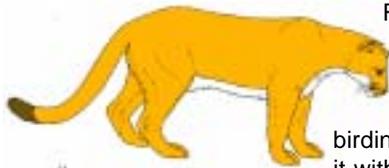
Saturday, January 19, 2013 Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church Ridgefield, IL 5:30pm

Recently, every passing week seems to bring a new report of a cougar being sighted somewhere in Illinois. Even though many of the reports are unsubstantiated, several of them have been backed up with photos proving the increase in numbers of these remarkable animals in our state. At the McHenry County Audubon Society's 2013 Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 19th, Chris Anchor will be presenting a program about his research on all of these large predators and their ecology in Illinois after an absence of over a century. He will also update us on his 13 years of coyote research in Cook County, since we heard about some of the early data six years ago. For anyone who missed that program, you can read about the study by Googleing *Urban Coyote Ecology and Management: The Cook County Illinois Coyote Project*.



Chris is the Wildlife Biologist with the Cook County Forest Preserve District, where he has worked since 1981. He has held his current position as biologist there since 1986. Chris earned his degree from the College of Agriculture at the University of Illinois, in Champaign.

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church, located at the end of Market Street off of Ridgefield Road in Ridgefield. The meeting will begin with members gathering at 5:30 p.m. for a potluck dinner that will commence at 6:00 p.m. The program will follow at 7:00 p.m. after a short meeting. Also, the MCA Big Year winners will be announced!



The annual raffle will follow the presentation, so please bring \$\$\$ as well as new or gently used birding/nature related items to include in the raffle. Also, please bring a dish to pass, a utensil to serve it with, reusable tableware, and your favorite non-alcoholic beverage. Coffee will be available at the meeting. Members of the public are welcome to attend the program.

Field Trip

Winter Birding By Car Saturday, January 5, 2013 McHenry County Leader: *Doug Crane*

The first Audubon field trip of the year will be on January 5, 2013: Winter Birding by Car. We will leave at 1:00 p.m. from Pleasant Valley, located at 13315 Pleasant Valley Rd which is south of Route 14 and a half mile West of Dean St. Meet in the parking lot at the entrance. Hopefully this year there will be some snow. Our target birds will be: snow buntings, Lapland longspurs, horned larks and hawks. Bring two-way radios if you have them. We will carpool.



Christmas Count

Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 15, 2012 McHenry County Leader: *Rob Gough*

This year our McHenry County Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society will hold its Christmas count on Saturday December 15th. Teams will count in a 15 miles circle centered in Bull Valley. A summation of this data is compiled and eventually emailed in to the state coordinator who then compiles it and relays it on to the National level. Those of you who have not participated and feel inexperienced can contribute and learn by providing an extra pair of eyes and help to record as a team covers it's territory. You need not commit all day. Most of the teams mix hiking while birding with simply riding the roads of their territory. If you are able to help, call or e-mail Rob Gough at 815-970-0323, robgough@att.net, and indicate the town or area you wish to bird. We will try to accommodate your needs



McHenry County Audubon • Celebrating Environmental Awareness Through Birding

Northwoods Adventure

Owl and Winter Bird Trip

Duluth, Minnesota

Leaders: Randy and Nancy Schietzelt

Friday through Monday, February 15-18, 2013

We are planning a four day trip to northern Minnesota over President's Day weekend to target the many northern species that rarely or never make it down to our area. We would leave early on Friday, February 15th for the drive up to Duluth. The drive north is pretty, and there is the possibility of some good bird sightings on the trip. Past trips have produced pileated woodpeckers, rough-winged hawks, bald eagles, and wild turkeys. Lunch will be at the Norske Nook to sample some of the Scandinavian specialties. Thirty miles south of Superior, Wisconsin, we will take some side roads that frequently have good winter birds such as evening grosbeaks. We will then stay at a motel in the Duluth area for three nights.

On Saturday and Sunday we will search the north woods for the best species listed on the hotlines. The Zak Zim Bog is usually one of the best places to find winter owls. Other sites are along Lake Superior, in the Town of Two Harbors (Bohemian waxwings), and the Superior National Forest. We never find everything, but the most likely targets will be great gray owls, Northern hawk owls, snowy owls, boreal owls (rare find), goshawks, gyrfalcons (rare find), rough-legged hawks, Northern harriers, bald eagles, American kestrels, harlequin ducks, common mergansers, common goldeneyes, wild turkeys, roughed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse (rare find), spruce grouse, ravens, gray jays, Northern shrikes, pileated woodpeckers, Bohemian waxwings, purple finches, boreal chickadees, pine grosbeaks, evening grosbeaks, common redpolls, hoary redpolls, pine siskins, both crossbills, moose, pine martens (rare find), and lynxes (rare find). Over ten years we have found all of these species, but please note, a good trip might only include 1/3 of this list. Thirty to 40 bird species, including robins, mallards, Canada geese, etc. are typical for the north woods in winter. There are never a large number of species present compared to here due to the wintery climate, but the ones that we will find will tend to be more interesting. Counting on sighting ten of the above species might be a conservative estimate for your wish list. Let's hope we do better than that.



On Monday, we will either survey the Duluth harbor or chase some very local hotline reports. By 11 a.m. or noon we will be back on the road toward home to make sure we are not too late for anyone needing to be at work the next day.

Interested? Contact Randy or Nancy Schietzelt at 815-356-1710 or buroak@owc.net for more information or to sign up. We will need to get motel reservations a month in advance since the snowmobile and cross country crowds can easily fill up the local motels. So January 19th at the annual meeting will be the deadline for deciding to go along. Also, feel free to let us know your top two or three target species for the trip, so our planning can take them into account.

MCA Calendar!



HOT OFF THE PRESS: McHenry County Audubon 2013 Wall Calendars!

Get yours for only \$10! Proceeds go to MCA Limited quantities available

McHenry County Audubon's very own 2013 wall calendars are now available! The creative genius of MCA member Debra Nord, the calendar features color photos of award-winning MCA member artists. At a cost of \$10 each, the proceeds will go to MCA. Great gifts and stocking stuffers for birders on your list! They will be available at the Annual Meeting on January 19th or sooner by contacting Debra at dnord1@cougars.ccis.edu.

Bird Walks

Bird Walks at McHenry Dam

Saturdays and/or Sundays at 8:00am

Ask for our refrigerator flyer!

January 5 & 19 and February 9, 2013

(Look for additional walks at Volo Bog State Natural Area)

Starting along the Fox River just south of McHenry, look for great blue herons, egrets, kingfishers and other water-loving birds. Grebes and mergansers begin to appear. Bald eagles are sometimes seen coursing the river. Then hit the "yellow trail" in search of wigeons, teal, shovelers and other ducks. Sandhill cranes gather by the dozens and then join flocks numbering in the hundreds as they begin to fly south. White-crowned and white-throated sparrows are moving through, and juncos have arrived for their winter stay. Bring binoculars and field guides or borrow from our leaders to discover the many species along the Fox River and nearby habitats. Walk length and time varies from 1 - 3+ hours with weather and luck in birding. Adults and attentive kids ages 6 and older are welcome. Meet at the south end of the McHenry Dam parking lot. Registration is requested at 815-344-1294 or dnr.volobog@illinois.gov Walk-ins welcome but walk may be cancelled if minimum registration is not met 24 hours prior.

... Sightings



November 3rd-
This afternoon there were 3 evening grosbeaks (2 male and 1 female) in my yard. They were very vocal and loud. After 30 seconds or so, a chickadee sounded the alarm and everyone took off.

- Karen Lund, Genoa, IL



December 1st-
15+/- Pine Siskins at our feeder allowing me to get within an arm's length as they chowed down on sunflower seeds

- Dwight Dalton



A Thanksgiving gift! Taking a walk along the shore of Crystal Lake on a lovely Thanksgiving morning while the turkey was roasting, I spotted a beautiful Bald Eagle setting in a large oak tree overlooking the lake. He was quite a sight against the clear blue sky and what surprise. I called several friends who rushed right over to see it with me and we pointed it out to everyone who passed by. I went back on the following Sunday around the same time of day just in case and there he was again right at the end of Oxford Lane! Such a gift.

- Nancy Loomis



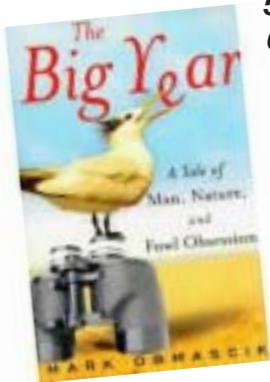
Thank you to
all contributors!

Big Year Contest

As the Year Draws to a Close, a New Leader Emerges in the McHenry County Audubon Big Year Contest! *By Tami L. Zuck*

Here is the current standings:

1. **Roadrunner** - 217 species with having last seen a canvasback duck
2. **Blue-winged warbler**- at 215 birds who also last saw a canvasback
3. **Painted bunting** - at 203 just saw a purple finch at the home feeder
4. **Phalarope** - 170 species
5. **Shrike** - still holding at 160 species
6. **Little dipper** - at 152 saw a merlin and harrier hunting in its yard at the same time!
7. **Merlin** - 131 - still holding at the same number from last month
8. **Chickadee** - 127 after no report last month
9. **Blissful bluebird** - 127 species with 88 seen or heard from the yard!
10. **Buzzard** -108 species having last seen a Northern harrier
11. **Blue heron** - 100 species seeing a hoary redpoll with a group of common redpolls and tree sparrows
13. **Loon lover** - made it to 100 with a pine siskin
12. **Lark bunting** - 96 species but out-of-town so unable to given an updated count
14. **Beginning birder** - at 75 species is hoping to see more at the Christmas Bird Count...and wondering if there's an award for last place!!



Congrats Randy!

MCA President Randy Schietzelt Appointed to IAS Board

At the recent Illinois Audubon annual meeting at Lincolnland Community College in Springfield on September 22nd, McHenry County Audubon's own president Randy Schietzelt was appointed as an at-large member of the IAS Board of Directors. Following is a reprint of the announcement that appeared in fall 2012 issue of The Cardinal News, the quarterly newsletter of the Illinois Audubon Society.



Randy Schietzelt is a native of Hoffman estates in Cook County with honors from the University of Wisconsin at Steven's Point (BS Biology) and the University of Louisiana (MA, Biology with aquatic biology emphasis). He is currently employed (soon to retire) as a Professor of Biology at Harper College in Palatine. Randy currently serves as President of the McHenry County Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society, Board Chair of Friends of Volo Bog and Board Member and Stewardship Chair of the Land Conservancy of McHenry County. He and his wife Nancy serve as stewards of the Prairie Hill Nature Preserve in Cary. Randy also contributes time and expertise for other environmental organizations in McHenry County leading prairie burns and restoration projects.



Bird Family Tree

From *Science News*, December 1st issue

Submitted by *Dwight Dalton*

A new avian family tree, out of Yale University, is the most ambitious effort yet to trace the evolutionary history and geography of living birds. This tree places each of the 9,993 known species of living birds on its own twig. The five year study used genetic data for more than 6000 species. This new big family tree found no overall relationship with latitude gradient. Researchers suggest that the tropical diversity numbers may be due to the fact that birds simply have had more time there. Randy in retirement has his task at hand, seeing all 9,993!

Field Trip Report

Sandhill Crane Field Trip Report

Genoa City, Wisconsin

Report by: *Randy Schietzelt*

November 4, 2012



About 15 Audubon members met at Glacial Park for our sporadic fall trip to the sandhill crane roosting site that is west of Genoa City, Wisconsin. Several sandhills were at the Lost Valley Marsh in Glacial Park, where a northern harrier flew by for the earlier arrivals' viewing pleasure. We caravanned to the traditional Wisconsin DNR property where the sandhills normally congregate. Immediately it was obvious that this drought year had changed everything. There were about 100 sandhills very close to the road, but on the opposite side feeding in the cornfield with a large flock of mourning doves. No sandhills were noticeable in the traditional wetland, which was dry this year.

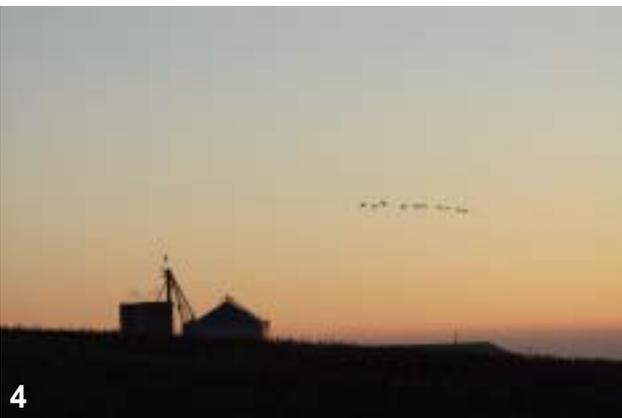
Then every bird spooked. About 100 mourning doves decided to flush. This

caused the 100 sandhills to also flush. Somehow this coordinated with around 1000 sandhills flying over us from beyond the wetland and heading toward Genoa City. An adult bald eagle followed the cranes, giving us some nice views as he passed. Many horned larks then flew around the cornfield, followed by several flocks of ring-billed gulls in tight V formations.



Then absolutely nothing was moving. Some Audubon members went chasing the cranes on local farm roads. We got word of a crane congregation a few miles away. So off we went to see some more cranes as the sun went down. The drought has drastically reduced the roosting places for cranes. They like to sleep standing in water so they can hear any predators approaching. That is apparently much more challenging this year. A coyote kept coming out to look over the cranes in a harvested corn field. That would cause the cranes to flush and create quite a ruckus. This must be a hard year on the cranes.

After the sun set, we proceeded to their famous fish boil and barbeque. Everyone enjoyed sharing birding stories over the delicious food, making it a fun conclusion to the trip!



Photos by *Randy Schietzelt* and *Tami Zuck*

McHenry Audubon Board of Directors

- **President** - Randy Schietzelt 815-356-1710 BurOak@owc.net
- **Vice President** - Walt Dembos 815-338-6831
- **Membership/Treasurer** - Jeff Aufmann
- **Recording Secretary** - Myrna Nelson 847-639-3425
- **Members** - Darlene Fiske 815-338-0592
Tami Zuck 847-922-6746
Debra Nord 815-353-1137
Nancy Loomis 815-459-8075
Stacy Iwanicki 815-344-1294

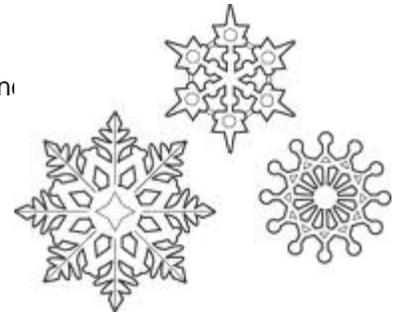


Other McHenry County Audubon Contacts

- **Bird Count Coordinator** - Rob Gough 815-385-2996
Alternate - Dwight Dalton 815-459-6069
- **Crane Count Coordinator** - Stacy Iwanicki 815-344-1294
- **Field Trip Coordinator** - Debra Nord 815-353-1137
- **Historian** - Stacy Iwanicki 815-344-1294 boglady@wonderwave.net
- **Hospitality Chairs** - Vince & LuAnn LaSusa 815-356-8625
- **Illinois Audubon Representative** - John Schroeder 815-730-7991
- **Newsletter Editor** - Tami Zuck 847-922-6746 tamizuck@comcast.net
- **Program Coordinator** - Nancy Schietzelt 815-356-1710 BurOak@owc.net

Audubon Contacts

- **McHenry County** www.McHenryAudubon.org
- **Illinois Audubon** 217-544-BIRD www.illinoisaudubon.org
- **National Audubon Society** www.audubon.org



Public Lands

- **McHenry County Conservation District** 815-479-5779 815-338-6223 www.mccdistrict.org
- **Moraine Hills State Park** 815-385-1624
- **Volo Bog State Natural Area** 815-344-1294 (To register for MHSP Bird Walks)

McHenry County Audubon

McHenry County Audubon

is a Member-Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society
Mailing address:
P.O. Box 67
Woodstock, IL 60098

General Meetings

Crystal Lake Nature Center
330 North Main Street (at N. Main Street & Terra Cotta Ave. (Route 176)),
Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014
Second Thursday of October, November, February, March and April
Meeting starts at 7:30pm • Refreshments served starting at 7:00pm

McHenry County Audubon Website

www.McHenryAudubon.org

Annual Meeting

Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church
8505 Church Street
Ridgefield (Crystal Lake), Illinois 60012
Third Saturday of January at 5:30pm

Local and Regional Field Trips

are held throughout the year

Weekend Bird Walks

at Moraine Hills State Park in McHenry, Illinois &
Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside, Illinois

We coordinate both the McHenry County **Spring Bird Count** and **Christmas Bird Count**

Please send submissions to In Flight editor Tami Zuck at tamizuck@comcast.net.

- Proper punctuation is appreciated! • Electronically sent original photos always welcome!
- Submission deadline for each newsletter is usually around the 20th of the month before

Changes of address (postal and/or email)? Please inform Membership Chair Dwight Dalton - 815-459-6069

2012-2013 McHenry County Audubon Calendar of Events

Watch your newsletter for details! This calendar is updated with each issue of the MCA newsletter. Members' meetings are held at the Crystal Lake Nature Center unless noted otherwise. Reservations must be made with the field trip leader so he/she can notify you of any last-minute changes, cancellations, etc. See list of contacts on page 7 of this newsletter. Field trips are co-sponsored by Illinois Audubon Society.

Date	Day	Event	Contact
December 15	Saturday	Christmas Bird Count	R. Gough-page 1
January 5	Saturday	Field Trip - Birding By Car - Meet at 1:00pm at Pleasant Valley	see page 1
January 19	Saturday	Annual Meeting at Ridgefield Church - 5:30pm potluck/meeting	see page 1
January 26/27	Sat./Sun.	Illinois Audubon Bald Eagle Weekend - Starved Rock State Park	Ill. Audubon
February 14	Thursday	Meeting at Crystal Lake Nature Center - 7:00pm	N. Schietzelt



Newsletter submission guidelines: All articles, photos, sightings, etc. are due by the date stated below. Any material received after this date is subject to omission and may be run in the next issue. Any written material submitted needs to be in paragraph form (as an "article") and not a flyer, brochure or other format. All material is subject to the discretion of the editor, space limitations and relevance to the purposes of the chapter newsletter and chapter mission. Unless part of an article, all photos submitted need to be accompanied by a date, location and photographer's name plus an identification of the subject, if known.



• **Deadline for articles for the January 2013 newsletter is Wednesday, December 26th** •

Annual Meeting/Potluck
is Saturday, January 19, 2013



Address correction requested
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P.O. Box 67

McHenry County Audubon