

# SPRINGFIELD AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPRING 2021

## President's Message

I hope that this newsletter finds everyone healthy and safe. I am sure that you are ready to resume normal activities. The Springfield Audubon Society hopes to begin the process of resuming its activities as soon as COVID regulations allow. The Springfield Audubon Society Board of Directors is meeting this week to discuss and develop a plan for resuming our programming.

The trails at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary are open for visitors from sunrise to sunset every day of the year. The building on the site that has restrooms is still closed. The picnic area and bird feeder viewing is available. There are many birds to be seen as documented by a recent bird hike. Many wildflowers and shrubs are now in bloom. The wetlands and vernal pools now have water and are attracting ducks, shorebirds and frogs. Please include time in your visit to check out the pollinator garden and the new Miss Margery's front yard garden located near the building. The grounds contain a water feature and the landscaping has been redone to feature native plants as well those left over from Miss Margery's time. Please observe COVID rules if you are around other visitors.

The Illinois Audubon Society is sponsoring a local chapter Big Day Competition on May 1. Entrants sign up and pick a local chapter team to join. They then are to observe as many species as possible between 12:00 am - 4:00 pm on May 1 anywhere across the state. Register at [illinoisaudubon.org](http://illinoisaudubon.org). The local chapter gets all the \$10.00 registration fee. It is a great way to safely bird watch and raise money for our chapter.

The bird feeders and seed at the sanctuary are provided by the Springfield Wild Birds Unlimited store. Please support this store when you need bird feeding supplies. Members can have a portion of the purchase price refunded or donated to our Audubon Chapter.

We will be communicating other chapter activities as soon as we can safely offer them.

### Project to Provide Nesting Boxes for Prothonotary Warblers

I saw my first Prothonotary Warbler in June 2019 along the Missouri River at Frontier Park. That flash of golden sunshine that flew by conjured up images of a true "River Warbler". The name "Prothonotary" was intimidating to me, as a fairly new bird watcher, it seemed to be a Southern bird of cypress swamps and remote flooded forests that a Springfield area birder would not normally encounter. Yet after this encounter I was intrigued on local sightings and managed to find a late nesting pair gathering materials in August of 2016 found by Alex Patia in Riverside Park near me in Sherman. This sighting and the photos he took inspired me to reach out to the Springfield Park District and partner on a nest box project.

The Prothonotary Project is modeled after Dr. Jeff Hoover and his work with the Illinois Natural History Survey along the Cache River in Southern Illinois. I was able to watch a segment on the PBS show NOVA that showed the use of half gallon Milk or Orange juice wax board cartons designed as nest boxes for Prothonotary warblers.

The first carton house was placed on April 15th, the earliest known dates for spring arrival males in the Springfield area, 2020 by me & my family. Trevor Slovick of Kincaid then helped me in scouting locations for possible breeding pairs. Tony Rothering, with Lincoln Land Community College, advised us to reach out to CWLP about using Lick Creek Wildlife Preserve near the Chatham Pumping station.

The Springfield Park District granted us placements for Prothonotary nest boxes at Stuart Dog Park Pond & Gurgens Park behind Carpenter Park in Sherman in addition to Riverside Park. Lick Creek had a combination of plastic Tupper ware prototypes with predator guards along with the cartons. Kincaid Lake in Christian County had cartons. Wooden nest boxes designed for Prothonotary Warblers were tried at Lake Sanchris and along Horse Creek in rural Montgomery County.

All the same locations will be utilized this year plus we have had requests to work with Blackburn College's sustainability club on placing and the construction of carton houses to promote the Carlinville area Bees & Trees initiative in Macoupin county. We donated to them 28 carton houses and a dozen empties for them to construct. The Allerton Park Bird Club received 24 carton houses from us and are now organizing a "Warbler Work Day" to install the nest boxes along the park's waterways. The Macon County Conservation Area and the Decatur Audubon received 48 carton houses with my daughter & I helping with the install. The Illinois Nature Preserve Commission granted me a permit to include Carpenter Park and the Riverside Flood plain to our current Riverside & Gurgens locations. IDOT received 10 additional wooden boxes from the McHenry County Audubon and these will be placed on IDOT administered ground that may be suitable for PROW nesting. Some were placed along Lost Bridge Trail this season.

Last year 59 carton style boxes were placed in appropriate habitat, forested flooded bottomlands, along creeks tied into river systems and lakes tied in with the Sangamon River and its various forks. Six plastic boxes went unused at Lick Creek and the 12 wooden boxes at Lake Sanchris & Horse Creek were 100% occupied by House Wrens. Of the cartons 3 were used by Prothonotary Warblers, the very 1st nest box set out at Riverside Park on April 15th then a late box set out at Riverside on July 20th. Another carton placed at Lick Creek on May 26th was also used by a Prothonotary. The rest of the cartons were empty or used by House Wrens at the various sites. All 3 nest boxes that were successful for PROW each contained 4 eggs indicating that the females were all first year nesting birds. This shows that there's a need for nest boxes in our local area. If we place houses for them then pairs are likely to stay over summer. This season we are hoping to observe the fledglings and have them banded to check on site fidelity return rates.

Josh Lively was one of our "Illinois Warblers" volunteers last season. This informal group of nature enthusiasts helped scout locations and check nest boxes. He was able to capture a photo of the female Prothonotary warbler leaving her carton nest box at Lick Creek. He was working at UIS at the time and put me into contact with Dr. Tih-Fen Ting, professor of Intro to Environmental Studies, with UIS. Professor Ting instituted the Prothonotary Project into her class curriculum where students constructed their own carton warbler house. UIS will now manage the Lick Creek site along with the UIS "woods" along Lake Springfield. The students are leading natural surveys by placing nest boxes, tracking locations with GPS coordinates, setting standards for proper nest box orientation, and establishing protocols on distances apart & height requirements to learn the birds preferences. The science learned from this endeavor will shape much needed research while inspiring young people to be interested in the natural world.

Please join the "Illinois Warblers" nature group by saving empty cartons of milk or juice. Instead of buying plastic jugs please consider trying wax board half gallon sized beverage cartons. If you want to construct a nest box on your own we will forward you the instructions. Be on the look out for appropriate flooded forest bottomlands or tree covered streams or lakes tied into our river systems as future homes for Prothonotary Warblers. Feel free to work with your local library or nature center for a place to collect cartons or as an arts & crafts project for kids to build nest boxes for warblers over the summer. We need of people interested in nature hikes to check these boxes for successful nesting pairs.

Vern Kleen has offered to work with our group in banding the adult and juvenile birds in order for us to better understand the phenology of Central Illinois. Vern received his Masters in Science degree from Southern Illinois University 50 years ago by studying Prothonotary Warbler nesting habitats and male breeding territories. With 50 years of promoting Prothonotaries in Illinois our group established the "Vernon Kleen Prothonotary Conservation Award" that we give to entities that promote the preservation of these birds in need. Our first recipient was the Springfield Park District for 2020 as they were our first sponsor. By Jarod Hitchings



## Upcoming Birding Events

May 1st	Illinois Audubon Big Day Competition
May 8th	Statewide Spring Bird Count
Late April	Moon Routes          census of night birds (mostly owls but others too) when moon is at its fullest
Late May	Moon Routes

## BIRDS of INTEREST LATE WINTER TO SPRING

### Lake Springfield & Nearby

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Long Tailed Duck	Surf Scoter	California Gull (imm & adult)
Iceland Gull	Glaucous Gull	Little Gull
Great Black Backed Gull	Trumpeter Swan	Snow Bunting

### East of Pleasant Plains

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Snowy Owl



**Snow Bunting**



**Long Tailed Duck**



**Great Black-backed Gull**



**Glaucous Gull**



## Springfield Birds Unlimited Purchases

### S.A.S. Board & Officers

Mike Holinga	President
Grace Norris	Vice President
Nicholas Primm	Secretary
Mary Grundel	Treasurer

### Board Members

J. Paul Biggers  
Mike Bowers  
Joe Gardner  
Vernon Kleen  
Anthony Dalka  
Matt Hayes  
Rick Lanham  
Debbie Bruce

Remember, when purchasing items at Springfield Wild Birds Unlimited, inform cashier that you are a Springfield Audubon member. Our chapter receives a percentage of purchases by members. During shelter in place orders can be place by phone or online and picked up.



Snowy Owl

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