Will County Audubon Society's

THE CHICKADEE

A chapter newsletter

January 2025

WILL COUNTY AUDUBON HOSTS

THE NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL: OUR SECRETIVE WINTER NEIGHBORS

PRESENTED BY

Michael Avara is the avian lab manager and field coordinator at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He supports lab data collection and analysis on the many diverse research projects in the Ward Lab. This includes managing the Illinois Motus Network of 30 telemetry towers across the state, working to restore endangered waterbird colonies, conducting field surveys to quantify bird populations, and analyzing telemetry data to better understand migratory stopover behavior of saw-whet owls

January 9, 2025

Business meeting 6:45pm
Program to follow 7:00pm

For the Zoom invitation, Go to
https://willcountyaudubon.illinoisaudubon.org/events/

Will County Audubon Programs are free and open to the public.

Saw-whet owls are a secretive seasonal resident of Illinois unlike some of our local species that are yearlong residents that make their presence known. We'll do a brief discussion of owl species found in the state that includes basic owl life history and behavior. From there we'll talk about what is known about saw-whet owls and what we are trying to learn about them as part of our research. We'll finish with a talk about good conservation practices that benefit owls and the larger ecosystem.

January Field Trip

Submitted by Kara Morales

Our first chapter trip is coming up soon, January 11th at Rock Run Rookery (23065 S Youngs Rd, Joliet, IL 60436). We will meet at the FPDWC info signage just off the parking lot at 9am. Looks like it may be cold, and it's always windy there, so dress appropriately!

This will be a short hike to the end of the paved trail and back, looking for various waterfowl, gulls, and of course- Bald Eagles! If you plan on attending and own a scope, it will come in very handy so please bring it! Registration is not required, but if you have any questions, please email me at karamorales727@gmail.com.

Lastly, just a reminder that the Forest Preserve District of Will County is holding their Eagle Watch on January 11th at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon from 11-3 (after our hike at the rookery).

February Field Trip

Submitted by Kara Morales

For the month of February, we are excited to announce a WCAS potluck breakfast at Pilcher Park Nature Center! We figured that our chapter will need some hang out time after having a few months off from in-person meetings. Doors will open on Saturday, February 15th, at 8:30am for set up, begin eating at 9, and we have the room until noon. If weather permits, maybe a hike can be in order around Pilcher Park as well!

I will keep you all updated on this and eventually send out a sign up sheet for food and drinks.

President's Message-January '25

Submitted by Rita Renwick

January and February meetings will be held via Zoom, and I look forward to connecting with members who find it difficult to make our Thursday evening meetings in person at Pilcher Park. We are planning a Feb. 15th breakfast potluck and hike there, after our winter sojourn. We will have a new audio system at our March meeting-something we have been working on for a year! Thanks to Greg DuBois who headed this committee.

May you be treated with abundant bird sightings in the new year! Juncos were eating the seeds on my nodding onions in the bitter cold a few weeks ago and two Carolina wrens have been consistent visitors!

Best wishes for 2025!

Conservation Notes-January '25

Submitted by Rita Renwick

Lake Renwick – No news yet on a decision regarding the future of nesting platforms at the lake. I checked at the beginning of December and the committee reviewing options will get back to us for input before Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Field Rep, Kim Roman reviews the proposal.

In 2015, 89 acres of Pilcher Park was purchased by Illinois Audubon with the assistance of Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. That land was transferred to the Joliet Park District in 2017 and became an Illinois Nature Preserve in 2018. A 3.2-acre parcel purchased by IAS with an ICECF Grant in 2021 was also dedicated an INP in 2023 and recently was also transferred to the Joliet Park District. This area is located at the west end of Hoberg Drive north of Woodruff Golf Course. Thanks to action by Illinois Audubon Society, our parent organization, this acreage is now officially part of the Preserve!

Upcoming Events

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Workdays at Pilcher Park:
9-Noon
Jan. 5, Jan. 18, Feb. 2, and Feb. 15.

Treasurer's Report

Submitted by Janet Schleeter, Treasurer

Balance as of 10/20/24 $5,310.43

Income:

Membership Dues 260.00

_____

Total Income $ 260.00

Expenses:

--0--

_____

Total Expenses $ --0--

Balance as of 12/20/24 $ 5,570.43

IAS REPORT

By: Frank Ibarra, IAS Board Representative, January, 2025

December Board of Directors Meeting: On Saturday, December 7th, the Board met for their last meeting in 2024. This will be the first Board Meeting for our newest at-large member, Maya Davis, who will be joining the Membership and Education Committee. The new Committee Rosters and the 2025 Field Trip Schedule were approved. Committees finalized their Activity Plans for the new Strategic Plan. Board Members enjoyed a tasty Holiday Lunch with a special dessert of Peppermint ice cream! Thank You Matt.

Annual Appeal: Letters for the Annual Appeal went out in November 2024. Gifts are continuing to arrive, even during the busy Holiday Season. As of December 23rd, the total amount is $73,010. with a budgeted goal of $125,000. IAS is confident that we will meet, if not exceed, our target amount this year. Stay tuned for further updates.

Chapter Certification: The annual Chapter Certifications were mailed to Chapter Presidents in late November. Although they are not due until the end of February, IAS Staff appreciates early returns.

Land Acquisitions: In November 2024, IAS completed two land acquisitions. **(1)** We purchased 106.8 acres of land, Sigrist tract, in Marion County, Illinois, to expand the mosaic of grasslands at the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area. Funds for the purchase were provided from the bequest of long-time member, Judith Joy, with the goal of prairie restoration. Seeding has already begun. **(2)** IAS closed on the 60 acre, Sinadinos tract, in Lee County**,** adjacent to Queen of the Prairie (Zellhofer). This parcel, now in row crop, will be restored as a grassland. This increases our overall holding in Green River Lowlands Preserves to 1,017 acres.

On the Road with Jo: Thankfully, Jo's travel schedule slowed down a bit. She still managed to cover some ground though. Jo attended a 30 x 30 Summit in Pontiac, a preliminary hearing in Lee County Courthouse as regards the trespassing charge at Gremel, the Annual Friends of Hackmatack Meeting where she accepted an award on behalf of IAS for our assistance in purchasing Tamarack Farms and a visit to the Will County Audubon Society's monthly meeting. Jo, Matt and Jamie managed back-to-back trips when they traveled to Hammond, Indiana, for the Chicago Wilderness Congress on November 14th and then then the workday and dedication event at the Anesi Wildlife Sanctuary, in Fults, Illinois on November 15th.

New Logowear Shop: Please consider shopping at the IAS Bonfire storefront! T-shirts, sweatshirts, totes and hats displaying the IAS logo are now available. Happy New Year!

November Meeting Minutes
Submitted by Michele Olson

Meeting Called to Order by Rita Renwick at 6:45 on November 14th.

In attendance
Welcome visitors and guests. Total Number present 37.
Rita extended a special welcome to Jo Fessett, IAS Executive Director, and guests from the Sand Ridge Audubon, located in South Holland.

Minutes of October 10, 2024, Meeting minutes read and approved. Motion: Joyce Flanagan Second: Bonnie Mesewicz.
Budget
Janet Schleeter, Treasurer, updated as described in the Newsletter.

Committee Reports

Hospitality: Leigh-Anne Clark, Judy Bartels and Kara Morales provided hospitality.

Newsletter: Lee Witkowski, deadline for the next issue is December 20.
Field Trip: Kara Morales, the November Field Trip will be held on November 16th, at Lake Renwick Rookery, and will be led by Michele Olson.
Kara Morales will reach out to the members to determine if anyone is interested in a field trip to Jasper-Pulaski Park in Indiana to view the Sandhill Crane Migration. The date is tbd.
Christmas Bird Count: Kara Morales/Bob Soukup, will be held on December 14th. Reach out to Kara if you're interested in participating.
Midewin: There may be an opportunity to participate in Openlands "Birds in My Neighborhood" program involving local schools and Midewin.
Programs: **Greg DuBois**, the January and February meetings will be held via Zoom. More information to follow.
Purchase of a new and improved sound system is forthcoming.
Conservation: Rita Renwick, The Park District received a grant from Nicor of which $1,000 will be used to improve the Wildlife Viewing Area at Pilcher Park. Workdays will be scheduled in the spring.
The IEC met via Zoom to discuss strategies for continuing conservation efforts during the next administration.
IAS Rep: Jo Fessett, reported that the IAS has completed the Pembroke Land Acquisition and has purchased an additional 100 acres in Marion County, to be set aside for conservation purposes. The IAS continues to aggressively acquire land that is vital for bird and wildlife habitat.

Old Business: Rita Renwick addressed the Plum Island Sign request. The leadership has recommended a $200 donation. Motion Carol Cooley Second Marty Mesewicz. The members approved the request.
New Business: Cathrine Miller relayed a request from Will county's Sunny Hill Retirement Home for volunteers who might be willing to visit the residents and share birding knowledge. This would be a good opportunity for community engagement and will require further discussion.

Announcements:
Long-time WCAS member, Doug Tweeten has passed away. See Rita Renwick for the address and further information.
The IAS will have a room at the Wild Things Conference on March 1, at Rosemont.

Adjourn: Motion: Connie Witowski Second: Cathy DuBois.

Program: Annual Member Photo Night

Next meeting

NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY, WILL COUNTY CHAPTER (**WCAS**)
Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Email _____
Phone _____
(It is IAS & WCAS's policy not to divulge your personal information)

Illinois Audubon Society Membership Categories:

Friend ($25)	Friend Plus ($30)	Affiliate ($100)	Steward ($50+$99)
Guardian ($100+$499)	Advocate ($500+$999)	Benefactor ($1000+)	Legacy ($5000+)

IAS Membership (Choose a category from above.) $_____required
Will County AS dues $ 10
Total $_____

Make check payable to: **Illinois Audubon Society**

Cut this completed application from this sheet and mail to: **IAS, PO Box 2547, Springfield, Il 62708-2457**
Or: Use the online form to join right now: http://illinoisaudubon.org/join/

Please do **not** use this form to **renew** your membership.

Annual renewals will be sent out approximately one month in advance of membership expiration.

If you mail this form, you may also include an additional donation to benefit **WCAS**'s local conservation efforts. Please write a separate check payable to: **WCAS, PO Box 3289, Joliet, Illinois 60434**

Chapter Officers

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