Will County Audubon Society's

THE CHICKADEE

A Chapter Newsletter

June 2025

President's Message-June '25
By: Martha Sojka

Chapter leadership is looking forward to the upcoming program year! Thank you to Rita Renwick, our immediate past President, for her leadership over the years and continued guidance as we go into the new Chapter year!

Anyone interested in helping with all that we have to offer, please reach out to wcas@illinoisaudubon.org and let us know what your interests are! Some areas of opportunity: planning chapter events, volunteering at a WCAS table to share information about the Chapter, cleaning bird feeders to support sponsored initiatives, Pilcher Park Bird & Butterfly Sanctuary maintenance, and hospitality to name a few!

Summer Field Trips

Submitted by Kara Morales

Happy Summer! Remember that we take a break from having meetings and programs and instead meet for evening birding walks on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30pm. Here is the line up:

June 12th: McKinley Woods- Frederick's Grove in Channahon (27110 S McKinley Woods Rd, Channahon, IL 60410). We will meet in the LOWER parking lot (as you drive through the preserve there are two lots- an upper and a lower- keep driving down until you can go no further. That is the lower lot). We'll walk though some of the wooded area on dirt trails as well as along the I&M canal which is gravel. Bringing bug spray is greatly encouraged! This is a birding hotspot in Will County with species such as Prothonotary Warblers, American Redstarts, Great-created Flycatchers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Barred Owls and more. Leader is Mat Zook.

July 10th: Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie- Prairie Creek Woods Trail in Wilmington. We will meet at the River Road Trailhead, but there is no address for this spot, so please use this Google link for directions: https://maps.app.goo.gl/uLxATAxiVpibFFqo6?g_st=com.google.maps.preview.copy

It is just off of the I55 and River Rd exit; drive all the way down to the gate and park in that lot. This is a fantastic trail to see a little bit of everything at Midewin: the prairie, marshland, and old-growth woods. We should be able to see many of the prairie species Midewin is known for: Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Sedge and Marsh Wrens plus maybe even rarer species like Upland Sandpipers or Bitterns. Trails are all crushed Limestone. Be sure to have bug spray. Leader is Kara Morales.

August 14th: we are bringing back the summer picnic and birding for this special evening! We will meet early in the back of the Pilcher Park Nature Center (2501 Highland Park Dr, Joliet, IL 60432) at 6pm for everyone to hang out and eat- please bring your own picnic meal and drinks. We will have an update on the WCAS feeder area and all the work that has been done there with the native plant grant our chapter received earlier this year. If time allows, we will do a short walk around Pilcher Park lead by Bob Soukup.

We also are planning some awesome pop-up birding trips for each month but those are still in the works. Look for future emails, Facebook events, and website updates for those.

As always, don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Looking forward to birding with many of you at these events!

Are you interested in connecting with members?

Join our Facebook Group titled "Will County Audubon Society Members". Search the group name and request to join.

Join our Google Groups chat group titled "wcaschat" for members. To join, please send an email to leewitkowski@comcast.net requesting to be added to the Google Chat Group.

May Meeting Minutes
Submitted by Michele Olson

Date: May 8, 2025

Time: 6:45 pm

Meeting called to order by: Rita Renwick, President

In attendance

Welcome visitors and guests. Total Number present: 32.

Minutes of April 10, 2025, were approved as posted in the newsletter.
Motion: Janet Schleeter Second: Diane Sniegowski Approved.

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Treasurer's Report: Janet Schleeter updated as described in the Newsletter ($4901.08).

Nominating Committee Report/Election: Maura Carlisle, Greg Dubois

Vote to approve slate of officers presented after asking for any other nominations: Pres. Martha Sojka, V.P. Greg DuBois, Treasurer Janet Schleeter, Secretary, Leigh-Anne Clark

Motion: Carol Cooley Second: Kathy DuBois Approved.

Name Change on Bank Account Motion Lee Witkowski Second: Kara Morales Approved.

Committee Reports

Membership/Outreach: Maura Carlisle Not reported.
Newsletter: Michele Olson, Deadline for the next issue is August 20.
Field Trip/Spring Bird Count May 10th: **Kara Morales,**
May 24, Thorn Creek Woods Preserve 9 am
Second Thursday Summer Hikes
Hospitality: Rita Renwick, Michele Olson, and Leigh-Anne Clark provided refreshments.
IAS Rep: Frank Ibarra, the next board meeting will be held on June 28th in Chillicothe.
Conservation: Rita Renwick, FPDWC has a contract with CAMBr- Chicago Area Mountain Bikers) to use trails at Hickory Creek LaGrange Rd Access. Rita will send a letter of opposition from our Chapter to the F.P Commissioners. The issue will be addressed at the FPSDWC meeting on June 5th.
Plan for Nature (Pilcher) Committee: Martha Sojka, Prep and Planting, tentative workdays on May 24th and 30th.
Old Business:
New Business:
Support for Lydia Pultorak Bird-A-Thon for COPE Environmental Center, Centerville, IN.
Vote for a $50 donation. Motion: Greg DuBois Second: Diane Sniegowski Approved.
Donations from the bird feeder cleaning of $312 to be given to MOTUS.
Announcements:
July 29 Lockport Library Talk, Greg DuBois and Martha Sojka.
August 16, Hummingbird Fest.
Adjourn: Motion: Lee Witkowski Second: Frank Ibarra.
Program: Matt Hayes, PhD, "Spring Id Refresher: Flycatchers & Swallows."

IAS REPORT

Submitted by Frank Ibarra

IAS Board Representative, June, 2025

Partner Support: The Illinois Audubon Society recently supported the Community Development Corporation of Pembroke-Hopkins Park with a $10,000. donation to help fund the 2025 YES Program, which provides an eight to ten week. hands-on conservation experience to high school students with the goal of creating conservation stewardship and leadership. The gift was acknowledged during the Rising Stars Gala held on April 18th.

June 28th Board of Directors Meeting: The June meeting will be held on location in Chillicothe, Illinois. The Board will have an opportunity to visit Fern Ridge Nature Preserve, Hopewell Hill Prairie Reserve and Chillicothe Bottoms. The Board Meeting will be held at Shore Acres, owned by the Chillicothe Park District on the banks of the Illinois River.

IAS/IOS Merger: Nathan Goldberg, (IOS VP), has been hard at work overseeing the IAS/IOS transition. Ongoing projects include sourcing content for back-issues of the IOS journal, The Meadowlark, researching database options for historic Field Notes included in 100+ back issues of the IOS journal and transitioning the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC) datasets into a digital archive for the public to access.

On the Road with Jo and Matt: Matt led a bird hike at H&B Bremer Sanctuary on April 12th, presented a program on Flycatcher and Swallow Identification and Conservation to the Lake-Cook Chapter on April 15th, presented a program on Warbler Identification to Springfield Audubon Society on April 17th and led a bird hike, followed by his Flycatcher and Swallow program on May 8th for Will County Audubon Society.

Jo traveled to Peoria on April 18th to receive the Sun Foundation Making Waves Award as part of the annual Clean Water Celebration.

Jo, Matt and Brian led an Adventures Field Trip to the Kankakee Sands region on April 26th. Birding locations included Iroquois County State Wildlife Area, Pembroke Savanna and Okan Savanna. The trip was attended by 11 hearty souls that braved cool temperatures and high water. Kim Roman and Eric Smith (both IDNR) provided amazing natural history and culture information about the area. A total of 50 species were observed throughout the day.

2025 Annual Gathering: This year's event will be held on September 26th & 27th, 2025, Illinois Beach State Park, Zion, Illinois. Registration opens on-line on June 9th, 2025. The keynote speaker for the Saturday Banquet will be, Scott Weidensaul, author of, 'A World on the Wing'. Lodging will be available at Inn on Sheridan**,** Sheridan Road, Zion, Illinois. Field Trips will be guided by Red Hill Birding.

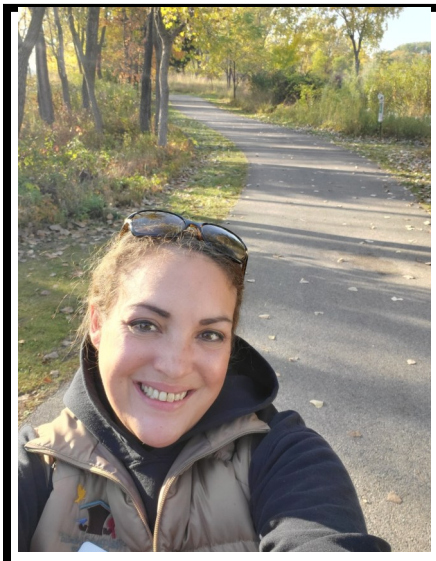
Attendees representing IAS at the Rising Stars Gala were Will County Audubon Society Members, (left to right) Kim Shehorn, Frank Ibarra (IAS Vice-President)< Johari Cole-Kweli (CDC-PHP), Georgeen Ibarra

Bird Friendly Coffee

Love your morning cup of joe? Consider using coffee that is certified Bird Friendly by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

Smithsonian Bird Friendly coffee is shade-grown, USDA organic and provides habitat for birds and wildlife that survive in the rich understory of rainforests. Monoculture plantations -where only coffee is grown, lack plant and wildlife diversity and are more susceptible to pests and diseases requiring greater use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.

Bird friendly coffee can be purchased at Wild Birds Unlimited-Essington Rd Joliet, Will County Forest Preserve Nature Centers (Four Rivers, Isle a la Cache, Plum Creek) and through Audubon member Greg DuBois who offers it as a quarterly fundraiser for his church. Greg's contact info is in this newsletter for more information.



The Joy of Summer Bird Feeding: A Backyard Experience Like No Other

By Ellen Green (owner of WBU Joliet)

Summer is one of the most magical times to enjoy birds in your backyard. From the sweet calls of goldfinches to the antics of clumsy young woodpeckers, the warm season offers a front-row seat to the family lives of your feathered neighbors. With over 100 North American bird species supplementing their natural diets with food from backyard feeders, summer feeding plays a vital role in supporting healthy bird populations.

While it's a common myth that feeding birds in summer will make them dependent or lazy, modern research tells a different story. In fact, studies have shown that birds visiting feeders during nesting season experience significant advantages. Parent birds, especially females, spend less time foraging and more time guarding their nests and chicks from predators. This increased protection results in better survival rates for eggs and fledglings.

One of the most heartwarming sights of summer is fledglings—newly independent young birds—being introduced to feeders by their parents. You might spot bluebird dads feeding their young sunflower chips, or chickadee chicks fluttering their wings and calling out impatiently to be fed. These moments aren't just charming—they're signs that your yard is a thriving bird habitat.

Feeders with high-protein blends like Wild Birds Unlimited's Nesting SuperBlend®—packed with sunflower chips, peanuts, mealworms, and calcium—help meet the intense nutritional needs of growing birds. Suet and Bark Butter® products are also excellent options for woodpeckers, nuthatches, and other suet lovers learning to feed.

Food isn't the only support birds need. Nesting boxes provide safe, dry shelter, especially during summer storms. And your landscape matters too: keeping a "messy" yard with native plants, brush piles, and leaf litter gives birds access to natural nest-building materials and insect prey.

This summer, consider your backyard a bird sanctuary. Whether it's a flurry of young finches testing their wings or the proud hop of a parent bird bringing their young to the feeder, you're not just feeding birds—you're witnessing the next generation take flight.

So fill your feeders, watch the nests, and take joy in the birds that call your yard home. Your small acts of care make a big difference in the wild world just beyond your windows. Visit Wild Birds Unlimited in Joliet for local expert advice on how to enjoy and help the birds this summer.

Upcoming Events

June 12th, 6:30 Birdwalk, McKinley Woods- Frederick's Grove in Channahon

July 10th, 6:30 Birdwalk, Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie- Prairie Creek Woods Trail in Wilmington.

August 14th, 6:30 at Pilcher Park Nature Center, Picnic and Birdwalk

July 29 Lockport Library Talk, Greg DuBois and Martha Sojka.

August 16, Hummingbird Fest.

Donnie R. Dann

May 2025 – Volume 29 Number 3

Conservation Alert

THE GREAT AND THE TERRIBLE

The Great

On May 13, 2025, The Board of Commissioners of Lake County Illinois passed an ordinance that requires bird friendly construction on all new buildings, both residential and non-residential built in unincorporated areas of the County.

An excerpt from the County's press release follows., sent to me by my commissioner, Paul Frank, who was instrumental and persevering in its ultimate passing:

"**May 13, 2025**

"Lake County Expands Bird-Friendly Building Requirements in Unincorporated Areas

After leading the way with groundbreaking bird-friendly building design policies last year, the Lake County Board has taken another major step to protect local and migratory bird populations. At its May meeting, the Board approved a new ordinance requiring bird-friendly design for residential developments in unincorporated Lake County."

The Terrible

On the federal level, this administration is proposing to redefine the hugely successful Endangered Species Act, by substituting the word "take" for "harm." This, from the American Bird Conservancy explains how this action would gut the ESA.

"The USFWS and NMFS have proposed rescinding the definition of "harm" under the Endangered Species Act, excluding impacts on habitat from being considered as impacting species. The vast majority of bird species listed under the ESA, and those likely to need its protections in coming years, are jeopardized from threats to habitat more than directly being killed.

Realigning the current interpretation of "harm" to mean "take" would make it infinitely more difficult to protect birds and other listed species imperiled by threats to their habitat"

The take home message during these times is that to achieve conservation, actions at the local level, however limiting they are, will be required.

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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**

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