



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



The Pelican Scoop

Inside this issue:

<i>Backwater Birding with Bob</i>	2
<i>Jr. Stewards Chatter</i>	2
<i>Flash Point - Connie Inskeep</i>	3
<i>"Local Fish Projects Process" by Ed Britton</i>	4
<i>Sightings around the Refuge by the Stewards</i>	5
<i>Stan Bousson Photos: More Bald Eagles</i>	6
<i>Schedule of Events and Membership Form</i>	7
<i>"Curing Cabin Fever" Geocaching Event</i>	8



Bald Eagle Trip To L&D 14



Snowy Owl by Anne Straight

Message From The President

This month marks the one year anniversary for the beginning of "The Pelican Scoop" newsletter. One year ago, Pam Steinhaus and I embarked on the monthly task of putting this newsletter together. Thank goodness Pam had lots of patience in teaching me how to use "Publisher", because I might have tried her patience a time or two as I learned my way through the program the first few months. Jeremy, one of the biologists at Ingersoll Center has mentioned several times how well we work together and how professional the newsletter looks. I tend to agree, we have a great little publication here

Anne's Birding Corner

The Snowy Owl is a large 24-inch white owl with variable amounts of darker spots and barring with yellow eyes. It is an owl of the open tundra (where it nests) and in the winter uses similar habitats. In winter, they are commonly seen sitting on low perches over open fields. The Snowy Owl hunts in the day as well as at night, eating ptarmigan and small mammals (especially lemmings). Migration south in winter is irruptive, with an abundance of largely immature

that I hope you enjoy every month. I would like to take a moment to also thank our monthly contributors as we wouldn't be able to do this without all of you. Thank you to Anne Straight, Bob Walton, Connie Inskeep, and Refuge Manager Ed Britton for their monthly editorial contributions. Also, a big thank you to our regular photographer contributors, Stan Bousson, Michael Fitzgerald, Larry and Bonnie Thoren, Wade and Connie Inskeep and Debbie Cram. I would also like to thank all of the photographers who regularly send in their fantastic photos for our "Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge" Facebook



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL

page. If you missed Larry and Bonnie Thoren's Bald Eagle videos this winter from Lock and Dam 13, you really need to check them out, they are fantastic. Thanks, Larry and Bonnie, for all you have done to increase our "Likes" on Facebook. Until next month, enjoy the last of what winter's birding has to offer! Spring is on its way!



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL

Owl was even reported in Bermuda in November 2013. This is only Bermuda's 3rd record of a Snowy Owl in modern history. Florida also recorded their 3rd record of a Snowy Owl this winter at Little Talbot.

Backwater Birding with Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Do you have a birding question?? Ask Bob! Please email Bob at stewardsumrr@gmail.com and your question will be answered in future issues.

Which year was the snowiest?

#1 - 2013 - 2014

#2 - 1978 -1979

#3 - 1974 -1975

Answer in next month issue.

In spite of its frigid wind chill and temperatures, winter can still be a rewarding time for hardy birders to venture outside and discover our natural world, even during these harshest of times. A recent hike through our Otter Creek forest reaffirmed the importance of providing adequate natural food and shelter for wildlife. A small cluster of American Highbush Cranberry bushes we planted was filled with Cedar Waxwings, several Eastern Bluebirds, a half dozen American Robins, and a single Ring-necked Pheasant. The pheasant actually hung upside down from the small branches to reach the bright red berries. After taking several pictures, we quietly retreated from this valuable piece of habitat to avoid flushing them and causing them to burn up energy desperately needed for their survival. In addition to shrubs that retain their fruit into winter, we have also planted Red Cedar for cover from winter winds and snow, and for the bluish-colored berries of the female trees, that provide a good food source for birds up into April. The major attraction for February birders has to

be the large numbers of Bald Eagles that now winter in this portion of the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge. There were recently over 50 eagles feeding in the open water below Lock and Dam 12 and over 800 roosting and feeding at Lock and Dam 13—quite a sight to see, especially considering that the sighting of a single eagle in the 1960's would have been newsworthy! Here is a list of "Coming Attractions" for the month of February: February 1-12—Bald Eagles will continue to be the major attractions, and will remain abundant in the open water below the Lock and Dams. Backwater areas will also have local, resident eagles staking out territories and beginning nest building activities. These large, 6-20 foot wide nests are easily seen this time of year and are best viewed from a distance to avoid disturbing the birds. Great Horned Owls will also be nesting. They sometimes even occupy old eagle nests, but are usually in old crow nests that are 4-6 foot wide. While driving lesser traveled and wind swept roadways, look for large flocks of Horned

Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings, which will be beginning their northward migration before spring. February 12-22—Barred Owls will be very vocal in the backwaters of the Mississippi as they attempt to attract mates and establish nesting territories. "Winter Ducks," including Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, and Buffleheads will be abundant in any pockets of open water in the Mississippi channel. February 22-28--White-fronted Geese, Ross' Geese and Snow Geese will be in the backwaters and will continue northward as weather permits. Sandhill Cranes and Giant Canada Geese will be arriving and will start their nesting activities. The first Turkey Vultures should also be arriving and will take advantage of all of nature's "winter kills" that will be slowly defrosting as the weather warms. To Cure your cabin fever, grab your binoculars and head to the river to check out all those white spots in the trees—they could be Bald Eagles, Snowy Owls or just plain old snow.

Ring-necked Peasant Photos by Sandy Walton



Jr. Stewards Chatter

What a pretty morning, the sun is glistening off the snow and temperatures are at a balmy 2 above. Mountains of snow surround the office bringing memories of my childhood to mind. Armed with shovels and winter attire my brother and I would spend hours making tunnels

through the snow. Wow, wouldn't it be fun to be a kid again with all this snow. Speaking of kids, Jr. Stewards is gearing up for its 3rd season starting March 2nd. We are looking forward to a great season of adventure and discovery. There are still a cou-

ple of spots open, so please pass the word. For more information about the Jr. Stewards program go to our website and click on Jr. Stewards. Here is a link to the application: <http://stewardsumrr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/registration2014.pdf>



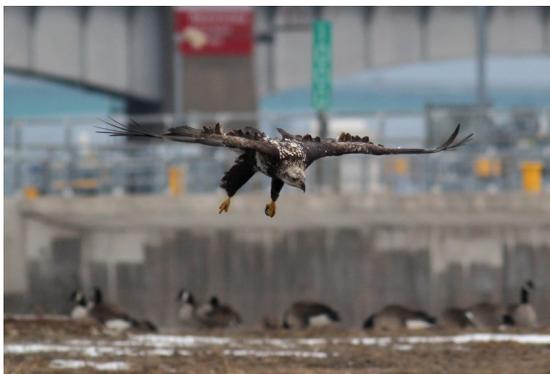
Flash Point - "Great Winter for Bald Eagles"



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.

We have had record numbers of Bald Eagles this winter. The freezing temperatures up north are forcing the Bald Eagles to come south to find open water and one of their favorite meals: Gizzard Shad. The Mississippi River is a gathering place for Bald Eagles in the wintertime and has enough of the fish to sustain healthy population of Bald Eagles who dine on the bounty that the river has to offer. The river is large enough to have several locks where the water stays open all winter long and attracts the eagles in large numbers. This year has been exceptionally great for Bald Eagle viewing.

Lock and Dam #13 in Fulton, IL has had a record number of Bald Eagles this winter having numbers in the thousands for a daily count. Imagine watching a thousand or more Bald Eagles sitting in the trees and fishing in the river directly in front of a viewing platform where you are standing. Bonnie and Larry Thoren, fellow Stewards, have gotten video of these eagles and posted them to the Stewards Facebook page. If you haven't seen any of their footage, you should make it a point to check it out. It is the next best thing to being there. We haven't gotten out as much as we would like because the temperatures this winter have been sub-zero with wind chills. It takes a hearty soul to brave those conditions for pictures. I have to admit, Wade is heartier than me when it comes to standing out in the cold. Lately he has gotten some awesome shots and the eagles have cooperated nicely.



Juvenile Bald Eagle flying over Canada Geese

What a Nice Pose



Tail Feathers



The Approach

Got That One!



“Local Fish Projects Progress ” by Ed Britton

Winter anglers leave a trail of auger holes in the ice that map their pursuit of those elusive big fish. These anglers will be happy to know that two new fish habitat restoration projects, Beaver Island in Clinton and Sunfish Lake near Galena, are progressing and will provide increased fishing opportunities in both winter and summer. The Corps of Engineer’s Environmental Management Program is funding these new initiatives that will be similar to two previous projects completed in Pool 13, Potter’s Marsh and Brown’s Lake. Fish habitat restoration projects typically deepen backwater channels to a minimum depth of six feet. The Beaver Island project is the first of its kind in Pool 14. Although construction is still a few years away, the first public informational meeting will be held March 26 in Clinton. A meeting place is yet to be determined but will provide an opportunity for public input on the project that is in its early planning stages. The Sunfish Lake project started last month and is the first phase of a planned four lake restoration project in Pool 12. This \$4.6 million project will mechanically excavate more than two miles of backwater channels. Tree removal is currently underway with excavation to begin as soon as ice-out occurs. Many of our Mississippi River backwaters have a water depth of only a few feet. A severe winter with long periods of ice and snow cover prevents the mixing of oxygen into the water column in these shallow areas. When oxygen content drops too low, fish have to move to deeper water. They expend energy and can’t survive in areas where river current is present. Fish habitat restoration projects provide overwintering habitat that is critical to fish survival. Bluegill, crappie, and bass typically move to specific areas during the winter. Radio telemetry studies show that as the water temperatures cool below 50 degrees in the fall, these fish begin to move into off-channel areas and backwater lakes to spend the winter. By the time ice forms, all the fish are in their wintering areas. These areas have no water flow with depths of 3 feet or greater, water temperatures around 3 degrees above freezing (main channel water temperatures are around 32 degrees), and maintain good oxygen levels throughout the winter. These backwaters are no secret to local anglers and support ice fisheries throughout the winter. Top areas include Rock Creek in Pool 14 and Potter’s Marsh, Spring Lake, South Sabula Lake, and Brown’s Lake in Pool 13. In a large system like the Mississippi River, the impact of a winter kill on the fishery resource is usually not significant. Some riverine species, such as gizzard shad, incur massive die-offs each year especially in young of the year and yearling fish. On smaller systems, such as inland lakes and ponds, a large percentage of many fish species may be killed during winter. In this case, fish stocking and a long period of population recovery may be needed. This winter’s extended Artic blast has been a roller coaster ride for winter anglers. As the weather warms, ice fishing will increase. Although there is thick ice in many areas, we are soberly reminded about the unsafe conditions of thin ice each year. Be aware that snow pack insulates and may prevent ice formation below. Underwater flows also impede ice formation. Fish safe and don’t let a tragic fall through the ice prevent you from going home to your family.



Ed Britton is a Wildlife Refuge Manager at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge .



“Sightings Around the Refuge”



Bald Eagle by Michael Fitzgerald



Bald Eagle by Michael Fitzgerald



Cooper's Hawk by Connie Zink



Bald Eagle by Larry and Bonnie Thoren



Sunset Through the Old Barn by Debbie Cram

Photos By Stan Bousson "More Bald Eagles"



Schedule of Events



Canada Geese by Michael Fitzgerald

Sunday, February 16th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour"
2:00pm - 5:00 pm (Destination Subject to Change)

Friday, February 21st "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour"
9:00 am - 12:00 pm (Destination Subject to Change)

Friday, February 21st Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting
12:30 pm - 2:30 pm (Note time Change)

Saturday, March 1st "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour"
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Destination Subject to Change)

Saturday, March 8th "Monthly Bird Walk" 9:00am - 11:00am (Meet at Sloane Marsh)

Saturday, March 8th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour"
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Destination Subject to Change)

Sunday, March 16th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Friday, March 21st Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting
11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Saturday, March 22nd - "Curing Cabin Fever V" (See Enclosed Flyer for Complete Details)

Saturday, April 12th "Monthly Bird Walk" 9:00 am - 11:00 am (Meet at Sloane Marsh)

Saturday April 12th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Friday, April 18th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting
11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Thursday, May 1st "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge"
8:30 am- 10:30 am

All events are free and open to the public but registration is required. Please call 815-273-2732 or email stewardsumrr@gmail.com

For additional events see our website www.stewardsumrr.org



Bald Eagle and Fish by Wade Inskeep



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge

815-273-2732

Primary Business Address stewardsumrr@gmail.com



Like us on Facebook

Check out our Website:
www.stewardsumrr.org

Membership Form

All members receive a 10% discount at the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center Book Store.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email: _____

Membership Categories

- Blazing Star (Student) \$5
- Yellow-headed Blackbird (Individual) \$10
- Ornate Box Turtle (Family) \$20
- Sandhill Crane (Supporter) \$100
- Osprey (Corporate) \$250
- Bald Eagle (Lifetime) \$1,000

Mail completed form to SUMRR:

7071 Riverview Rd

Thomson, IL 61285

www.stewardsumrr.org



Make a difference and join today.



March 22, 2014

Curing Cabin Fever V

Introduction to Geocaching



It's been a long and cold winter and the need to cure that cabin fever is in high demand. Join us for an exciting day. We will begin with a Meet and Greet at the Heirloom Market / Café from 10 am – Noon. This will be a great time to share your geocaching journeys and have a bite to eat. We will follow up with an "Introduction to Geocaching" class for beginners at the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center at 12:30.

Where:

*Meet and Greet – Heirloom Market/Cafe –
2200 Il Rt 84, Thomson IL
Class: Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center,
7071 Riverview Road Thomson, IL*

Schedule for the day

10 am - 12 pm Meet and Greet: Heirloom Market/Cafe, Thomson IL.

12:30pm – 1:45pm - Introduction to Geocaching - Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center

1:45 – 3:30 Let's Go Geocaching

Participants will head out in search for hidden treasures. Some will be temporary hides for the event and some will be actual geocaches that can be logged as a find.

You can make your reservation by calling the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center at: 815-273-2732 ext. 116. Please include the TOTAL number of people that plan on attending. Heirloom Market /Café will need to know in advance how many people to expect.