

June 2014

Volume 2 Issue 5



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>	3
<i>The Colorful Birds of Spring</i> <i>by Connie Inskip</i>	4
<i>Spring Pulse of the River</i> <i>by</i> <i>Ed Britton</i>	5
<i>Supporting Your Refuge</i>	6
<i>This Ol Walnut Tree</i> <i>by</i> <i>Debbie Cram</i>	7
<i>Sightings around the</i>	8
<i>More Sightings Around the</i>	9
<i>Even More Sightings Around</i> <i>the Refuge</i>	10
<i>Schedule of Events and Mem-</i> <i>bership Form</i>	11
<i>Neal Smith NWR Bus Trip</i>	12

Welcome New Members:

Pam Brandt
Laura Adkins

Renewing Members:

Maggie O'Connell
Edward Weiland
Cindy Brown
Dave Johnson
Kim and Jim McLuckie
Nancy Wilkinson
Stan Bousson
Bob and Sandy Walton
Anne Swan-Johnson
Brian Bielema
Larry and Bonnie Thoren
Michael and Cindy Fitzgerald
Jane McCarthy
Marion Gieskecke
Debbie Cram

Message From The President

I hope everyone is enjoying our long awaited Spring. Along with the comings of Spring, has also come major yard and garden work restoration at my house. It seems our grueling winter was pretty hard on many of my perennial plantings. Time has been so short that I was never able to get the May newsletter out so this issue is a combination of both May and June. I hope to be back on schedule by the end of the summer. Spring has also brought some great opportunities for bringing new birders to the area. On June 1st we were able to take members of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club on a tour of Lost Mound Unit. We found

several Loggerhead Shrikes that day along with Lark, Henslow, Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows.



This Sunday, June 15th we will be hosting the Iowa and Illinois Young Birders Club on a tour of Lost Mound Unit. How exciting to get to meet all these young birders and introduce them to the wonders of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL. Fish Refuge. They will be attending the "Owl Prowl" on Saturday night along with their tour of Lost Mound Unit on Sunday morning. If you have an organization that would be interested in a scheduled group tour of the refuge please contact me and we will see what we can set up for you. Until next issue, have a great summer and get out there and enjoy the wonders of nature!

Anne's Birding Corner



Great Blue Heron by Anne Straight

A large gray wading bird with a long neck and spear-like bill, the Great Blue Heron stands about 4 feet tall, and is often mistaken for a crane. The folded neck and arched wings when flying, is an indicator of a heron. Its call is a hoarse dry croak. The Great Blue Heron nests in colonies in trees. They forage in streams, ponds, wetlands and sometimes in fields. Their prey include fish, snakes, frogs, and small mammals. Their breeding range is



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL. from southern Canada south to Mexico. They winter from Mexico south to the northern part of South America.

Backwater Birding with Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Black flies, also known as "buffalo gnats" or "turkey gnats" can be quite annoying to people and mammals. Much like mosquitoes, both the male and female Black Fly feed on nectar. It is only the female Black Fly who bites since she requires blood for the development of her eggs. Black Flies are attracted to humans largely through the carbon dioxide we exhale, but these bloodsucking insects are also attracted by dark colored clothing, perfumes and sweat.

At last the lingering layers of ice have been stripped off our backwaters, exposing a major smorgasbord of winter-killed fish, tender young tubers and greens from cattails and arrowleaf, and an abundance of early, emerging aquatic insects, making our backwaters an excellent dining area for hungry birds. The month of May represents the "Super Bowl" time for birding. The largest numbers and diversity of birds make use of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge now, as a temporary stopover on their journey northward, or for territorial homesteading as summer residents to raise their young.

The majority of the birds we observe in May are known as neotropical migrants and are represented by warblers, grosbeaks, bobolinks and tanagers. They spend most of their year in Central and South America and we basically borrow them for the summer or get a brief glimpse before they travel further north. Despite the cold and rainy spring that has created some major challenges for birders, the birds have been arriving in surprisingly large numbers and because of the weather, many bird species that are normally gone by March are lingering. During May, at Green Island, Sandy and I were amazed to still find winter birds such as Rough-legged Hawks, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Harriers, Tree Sparrows, and even Greater White-fronted Geese. Accompanying the winter birds, we found hundreds of Palm Warblers, several Yellow Warblers and Blue-wing Warblers, over a dozen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, lots of White-throated Sparrows

and every species of swallow. In addition to the common spring migrants, we've encountered some rarities--Red-necked Grebes, Eared Grebes, a Piping Plover, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Common Loons, Willets and new nesting pairs of Peregrine Falcons setting up residence in Bellevue and Dubuque.

On a humorous note, I have observed that several local Canada Geese have shown adaptation to global warming and the resulting extreme rainfalls and flooding that have destroyed their nests for the past five years. Instead of nesting on muskrat houses, they have taken up nesting in abandoned eagle nests that are 40-60 feet above the ground. It should keep them high and dry but it makes for an exciting skydive for the day old goslings!

As May comes to an end, the majority of the spring migration is completed. I was surprised to see quite a few shorebirds on Memorial Day. In a flooded field near Lost Mound we observed Least Sandpipers, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Stilt Sandpipers, and Spotted Sandpipers. A large flock of Ring-billed Gulls and Herring Gulls had a beautiful pure white Glaucous Gull in their midst, along with a Wilson's Phalarope and a Black-bellied Plover.

With the arrival of June, I am sure the migration will be over and the birds we view will represent summer residents that will become quite secretive as they begin their nesting activities. During June, birders must be diligent in their efforts

to be less intrusive to birds and their habitat. Unduly disturbing nesting birds by forcing them to flush from cover and utilizing territory or alarm calls from cell phone apps and other electronic devices to expose them for your viewing adds critical stress to the birds during brood rearing activities.

I wish everyone good luck with your spring birding adventures—which recalls to me a favorite saying of my father. "Good luck is merely the logical consequence of anticipation, preparation, and participation." It has worked for me in birding, canoeing, hunting, fishing, and any other outdoor venture that I have partaken. Here's a short list of things that will enhance your good luck. (1) It never hurts to take the time to knock the dust off your bird guides and reacquaint with key bird identifying field marks, arrival times, and distribution patterns. (2) Review local newspapers or weather radio for river stages. A quickly dropping river level will expose mud flats and will attract large numbers of migrating shorebirds. (3) Make sure your spotting scope and binoculars are in good working condition and the lenses are clean. (4) Most importantly, make sure you spend plenty of time participating!

Jr. Stewards Chatter

On Saturday April 5th, The Jr. Stewards had 2 speakers that talked about art and nature. We made different kinds of animal and leaf prints. We also learned how to identify leaves and trees.



Shayla Roberts,
5th grade Savanna,
IL



Front Row (left to right) Toby Rollins, Roy Brown II, Ethan Brown

Middle Row (left to right) Shayla Roberts, Emma Swiderski, Sophia Guenzler, Allison Zimmerman and Alyssa Smith

Back Row (left to right) Jacob McLuckie, Brennon Cavanagh and Pam Steinhaus

Missing Logan Zimmerman and Spencer Haxmeier



Allison Zimmerman,
6th grade
Clinton, IA.

The Jr. Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge met Saturday, May 3rd, at the South Sabula Lakes where we met Scott, Nate, and Denny of the Iowa DNR. The weather was sunny but windy. We checked Denny's fyke nets and trot line. We talked about the 10 fish species he caught. We got to hold a yellow perch and got to stick our finger into a drum's mouth - it felt hard and wet. Next Denny showed us a tiger salamander. Scott went next and talked about different species of mussels in the Mississippi, he also talked about invasive species like zebra mussels which was very interesting. Nate was last he talked about boat safety like safety vest, a flotation device, and a fire extinguisher. But the last part was Denny's fish fry. I think that might have been the best part!



Flash Point - "The Colorful Birds of Spring"

With the warmer weather, the migrants are coming in quickly. I am seeing lots of posts on social media sites of shorebirds, warblers, grosbeaks, finches and sparrows that are arriving.

Scheduling conflicts have kept us from getting out and enjoying the refuge these past few weeks and I'm sure we are missing a lot. I am looking to all of you to keep me informed of what you are seeing when you are out and about on the refuge.

I will share some with you some of the more colorful and beautiful little birds you may see in the area.



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



“Spring Pulse of the River” by Ed Britton



The Mississippi River's spring pulse is upon us bringing both good and bad news. Flooding has been tempered by slow snow melt in the north. Flooding has benefits in that it removes trash that litters the shoreline and either pushes it a little higher on the shore or sends it to our neighbors down south. Extended periods of high water contribute to increased sedimentation and filling in of backwaters which is a chronic problem in our area.

The spring high water provides perfect conditions for Asian carp, bigheads and silvers, to migrate upriver. These Asian invaders escaped from Arkansas fish farms in the 1970's and began their trek north, south, east and west. They compete directly with our native fish in their diet of phytoplankton and have taken over much of the Illinois River fishery. There have been infrequent reports of Asian carp this far north on the Mississippi River. However, in April, a 36 inch 21 pound silver carp was caught in Dubuque and in a nearby area Asian carp eggs and embryos were discovered. A 73 pound bighead was caught in Sabula Lake in June 2012. Monster bigheads can weigh 90 pounds and measure 60 inches long.

Silver carp are the notorious flying fish that leap from the water in large numbers when a passing boat's motor excites them. Accidents with humans are common when boaters, skiers, and tubers are hit by the flying fish. Two underwater electric barriers span the Sanitary Ship Canal near Chicago and emit shock waves to keep these invasive carp from entering Lake Michigan and impacting the multi-million dollar fishing industry.

The great white trawlers, American white pelicans, have returned in large numbers and grace the shorelines and skylines with their synchronized swimming and aerial acrobatics. They arrived on the trailing edge of ice, taking advantage of cold water temperatures to scoop up slow moving fish. The pelicans are nesting on several island sandy beaches located north of Clinton in Pool 13. They are joined by their colonial nesting buddies, great blue herons, great egrets and double-crested cormorants. These islands are the only known white pelican nesting colonies on the Upper Mississippi River.

You can watch the daily activities of a pelican nesting colony on the live streaming Internet video webcam at the Stewards of Upper Mississippi River Refuge website: www.stewardsumrr.org. It is a busy time on the island and the antics of the pelicans are entertaining. The pelicans are expanding their nesting territories to other sandy beaches which put them in conflict with people who also want to enjoy the beach. Please avoid the beaches where pelican nesting colonies are present because minimal disturbance may result in colony abandonment.

Sandhill cranes are also nesting but still haven't figured out the spring pulse of the river. They nest in shallow water areas with minimal nest materials to keep the eggs dry. The spring high water has once again flooded several nests. The Midwest Crane Count was conducted on April 12 in association with the International Crane Foundation and 10-12 pairs of sandhills are in the area.

Bald eagle nesting is also in full swing. The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is an important bald eagle concentration area with thousands of eagles in winter and hundreds of nests in spring. In 2013, there were 311 active bald eagle nests on the Refuge. With the increase in number of nests, bald eagles are moving farther away from the Mississippi River and in close proximity to people.

“Supporting Your Refuge”

We would like to express our appreciation to our supporters for their generous donations this past year. Without your support we would not have been able to complete the following projects: Computer upgrades to provide a better opportunity to watch the activities that are occurring on the Refuge; Solar Power generating upgrade to keep the pelican cam on; Trees have been planted to improve diversity to our floodplain forest; Provide habitat management by reducing invasive species; Jr. Stewards are able to go to Neal Smith NWR and learn about a prairie refuge. These are some of the big projects that we were able to complete.

As budgets continue to get slashed the Stewards have been able to walk beside the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge / Savanna District and provide much needed support. We cannot do this without your continued backing. You can donate directly by visiting Stewardsumrr.org and select donate now. If you shop at amazon.com, try going to smile.amazon.com and select the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge as the charity to support. Amazon will donate .05% of the purchase price from your purchases. Your employer may have a program in which you can select a charity to make a donation to. Together we can get things accomplished.

Thank you to our following supporters:

Solutions from Science – Thomson, IL

The National Bank

NW Illinois Audubon Society- Freeport, IL

Ronald Orris – Quad Cities

Wilson Conservation Trust – Sarasota, FL

JC Carey – Savanna, IL

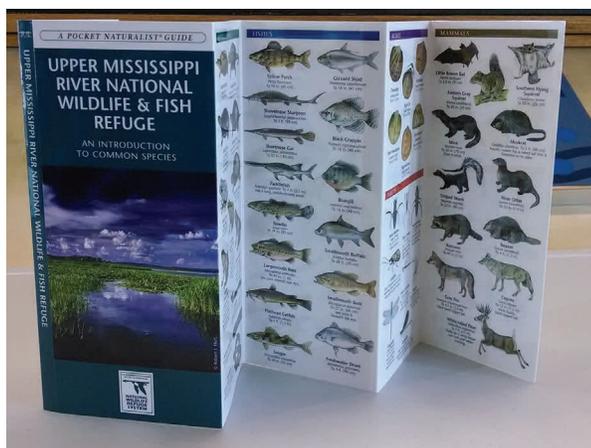
Powerlab – Savanna, IL

Shepherds Landscaping - Savanna IL

Stewards Members



“Newsletter Challenge”



After completing the April newsletter we noticed a mistake. We issued a challenge to all of you to find it. Turns out we really had two mistakes. The photo labeled Wilson’s Snipe was actually an American Woodcock. Also, we had put the incorrect year for renewing your membership. The winner of the drawing is Ethan Brown. Congratulations Ethan! This was so much fun we will be continuing the challenge this month. Please find the mistake in this month's newsletter and email us your answer for a chance to win another pocket guide to Common Species on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Previous winners are not eligible for the new drawing.

“This Ol Walnut Tree” by Debbie Cram

This page is devoted to the story of “This Ol Walnut Tree” a Facebook page created by Stewards member Debbie Cram. You may follow Debbie’s adventures on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/This-Ol-Walnut-Tree/1484600211756249>. This walnut tree resides on the prairie, adjacent to Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center, on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Here is Debbie’s story:

I have always had a drawing to the walnut tree, I moved here 6 years ago and the first time that I rode my bike past the tree on the bike path it caught my eye. She sits on protected refuge land in Thomson, IL. I had taken pictures of it in the past and thought she was quite beautiful. She seemed to call to me and I wanted to capture her beauty on a day to day basis depicting the changes that surround her through out the year. From day 16 of the documentation I have also given my self another challenge of just using a 4 word statement to describe the feeling of the day as I look around the tree. I look forward to each day and the changes that I see as well as the challenge of what the new photo of the day will be. The tree seems to speak to me while I am there and she never lets me down on what to capture for the day. I am currently on day 66...a long road awaits me! But I love a good challenge. Debbie Cram



Day 22



Day 29



Day 34



Day 48



Day 57



Day 66

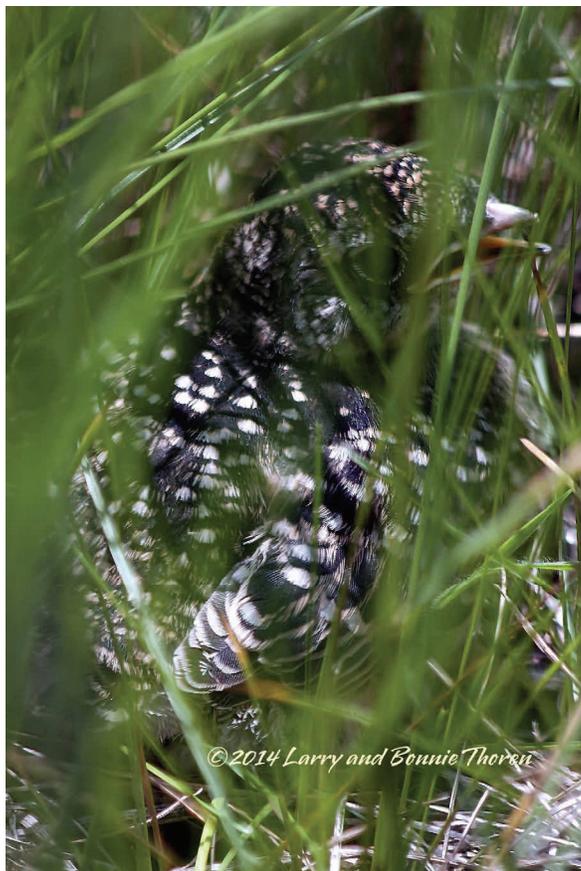
“Sightings Around the Refuge”



Mushroom by Debbie Cram



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Connie and Wade Inskeep



Upland Sandpiper Juvenile by Larry and Bonnie Thoren



Cooper's Hawk by Larry and Bonnie Thoren



Dicksissel by Larry and Bonnie Thoren

“More Sightings Around the Refuge”



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher by Steve Aram



Willet and Greater yellow Legs by Sandy Walton



Peregrine Falcon Eyas and Eric Tomasovic



Barn Swallow by Connie and Wade Inskeep



Painted Turtles by Richard Cox



Northern Waterthrush by Wade and Connie Inskeep

“Even More Sightings Around the Refuge”



Brown Thrasher by Michael Fitzgerald



Sandhill Crane by Stan Bousson



Piping Plover by Stan Bousson



Black-throated Green Warbler by Michael Fitzgerald



Red-necked Grebe by Stan Bousson

Schedule of Events



Lost Mound Tour by Connie Zink

Thursday, June 19th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Friday, June 20th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Saturday, June 21st "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Thursday, July 3rd "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Saturday, July 12th Trip to Neil Smith NWR (See newsletter for more details)

Thursday, July 17 "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Saturday, July 19th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Friday, July 25th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Thursday, August 7th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

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

Saturday, August 9th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 2:00 pm- 6:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office by 1:45)

Friday, August 15th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Saturday, August 16th "Refuge Amazing Race" 9:00 am-12:00 pm (Details next month)

Saturday, August 16th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 6:30 pm- 9:00 pm (Evening Tour)

Sunday, August 17th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 3:00 pm- 7:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office by 1:45)

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



Golf Cart Tour by Connie Zink



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.

Trip to Neil Smith NWR

Trip to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge – July 12

The Jr. Stewards will be taking a trip to Prairie City, Iowa, home to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. We have some seats open and would like to extend an invitation to Stewards Members to join us. Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge is sponsoring the trip, however there will be a minimal charge of \$10 per member and \$30 for the general public.

Please contact Pam Steinhaus to book your seat. She can be reached at 815-273-2732 or email at Pam_Steinhaus@fws.gov

The tentative schedule is:

8:00 am Leave Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center

(We can pick up folks that come up from the south at a different location.)

11:30 am Arrive at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Prairie City, Iowa

Lunch: Bag Lunch

3:30 pm Leave Neal Smith NWR

7:00 pm Arrive back at Center

To keep the cost down, participants will bring a sack lunch/snacks/ etc. (We will have a few coolers if needed)

