



## Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



# The Pelican Scoop

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### Welcome New Members:

Dave Watts  
David and Megan Mercado

### Renewing Members:

Anne and Doug Schmidt  
Betty Hagglund  
David Johnson



Great Egret by Connie Inskeep

## Message From The President

It is hard to believe it is the beginning of August already, Fall is just around the corner along with all those migratory birds passing through our area. You may have noticed we were not able to get out a July issue of the newsletter so we will move right on into August. Please be sure to take notice of the Young Birders weekend that was hosted here in Savanna, back in June. The article was written by one of our Jr. Stewards, Ethan Brown who attended the event. We have also included some photos and an article this month by Alyssa Smith from the Jr. Stewards' Neil Smith NWR bus trip. All the kids and their parents had a great time and we are hoping to be able to

visit another refuge again next year. Special thanks to all who donated to make this trip possible such as Solutions from Science, J.C. Carey Motors, Shepherd's Landscaping, Powerlab, Milo and Beaver's, and Cindy Brown among others who have specifically donated to the Jr. Stewards program. Coming up on August 16th is our third annual "Amazing Refuge Race". Details for registration are on page 12. We have a maximum of 10 teams and currently have 5 teams signed up. So **register now** to be able to take part in this great family fun event. I also want to give you some notice for something new added to the Clinton, Iowa Bald Eagle Day 2015 schedule. The Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL

Refuge will be sponsoring a Bald Eagle "Photo Contest". Clinton Bald Eagle Day will take place on January 10th at Clinton Community College along with live Bald Eagle viewing at Lock and Dam 13 in Fulton, Illinois. More details will be released in next month's "The Pelican Scoop", so get those cameras out and ready! Have a great August and see you again in September!

## Anne's Birding Corner



Dickcissel by Anne Straight

The Dickcissel gets its name from its call that sounds like "dick dick dickcissel". A grassland prairie bird about the size of a House Sparrow, the Dickcissel has a large seed-cracking bill. Male has a yellow eyebrow, black V-shaped bib on a bright yellow breast. It has a chestnut wing patch. The female is mostly brown and may show a little yellow or chestnut. It feeds on insects and seeds. The Dickcissel breeds in the interior U.S. east



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL

of the Rockies to Ontario, Canada in meadows and prairies. It migrates south to southern Mexico, the northern part of South America.

## Backwater Birding with Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Dragonflies catch their insect prey by grabbing it with their feet. They're so efficient in their hunting that, in one Harvard University study, the dragonflies caught 90 to 95 percent of the prey released into their enclosure.



Widow Skimmer

After a prolonged summer of flooding, the Mississippi River backwaters are finally discernable from the swift main channel and will offer some excellent birding opportunities for the remainder of the summer and the fall. The leisurely fall migration is already underway. As the river drops to normal levels, the newly exposed mud flats along the Mississippi River shorelines are offering feeding opportunities for shorebirds that are some of the earliest migrants.

On a recent trip to Green Island we saw flocks of migrating shorebirds, mostly Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Semipalmated Plovers that have recently va-

## Jr. Stewards Chatter

On Saturday, July 12, the Jr. Stewards and Families took a trip to the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, Iowa to learn about a prairie refuge instead of a river refuge like we have here. 200 years ago the Wildlife Refuge was wild prairie with thousands of species. Then it was converted into farm land. When they sold the farm land it was restored to prairie. We went on a hike and saw plants including compass plant, cup plant, and sweet clover. The Compass plant showed travelers what direction they were going because the flowers pointed north or south. The Cup Plant leaves are shaped like a cup and holds rain water for animals and birds to drink from. Sweet clover is a species that is native to Eurasia, but not North America and is very invasive. We pulled some of the sweet clover, because it

cated their nesting areas as far north as Hudson Bay. Soon to follow will be larger shorebirds, including Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitchers, Long-billed Dowitchers, Dunlins, and Godwits taking advantage of the smorgasbord table offered by the Mississippi mudflats.

Other subtle changes are also occurring in our local bird populations. The American Robins that nested in many of our yards this summer and greeted the sunrise with their territory calls are now silent and have headed to wooded areas where they will join their relatives including bluebirds and thrushes for a leisurely journey southward. Also dis-

appearing from our backyards are the orioles which have completed their nesting and are moving south. Our local swallows and Red-winged Blackbirds are also beginning to stage in large numbers on high-line wires in preparation for their fall journey.

I encourage everyone to venture outside this month and witness some of the early migration and other transformations that are occurring in our native communities. The temperatures are comfortable, the gnats have finally subsided, and our backwaters will offer plenty of prime viewing opportunities before the colorful fall foliage is here again.



Alyssa Smith, 10th Grade Savanna, Il.

doesn't belong there. The roots were about 1-2 feet long. We read a poem called Prairie Birthday, and guessed what the meaning of "prairie birthday" was. We learned that the meaning of prairie birthday is the first time a plant blooms each year. We drove through the bison and elk enclosure. There are about 60 bison and a few elk. We saw some bison and no elk. We didn't see a lot of the animals because they like to be in the shade under the trees.



### *Jr. Stewards Chatter Continued....*

The Jr. Stewards group met on Saturday, June 7 at Spring Lake. The young stewards caught macro-invertebrate from the water and studied them through microscopes to identify the tiny creatures. After the small insects were identified and counted, the stewards used a formula provided by Pam Steinhaus of the Ingersoll Wetland Learning Center to see how healthy the water conditions were. The Jr. Stewards concluded the water at Spring Lake was good.



Jacob McLuckie  
5th grade Savanna,  
IL



Taking a closer look at macro-invertibrates.



Brennan and Logan examining their catch.



Sophia and Allison getting a closer look.



Neil Smith NWR Trip – Jr. Stewards pulling invasives.

## *Flash Point - "Landscape Photography"*

There is no better place to see spectacular landscapes than the national parks and wildlife refuges of the U.S. Tucked away in these parks and refuges are beautiful scenes that beg you to take a photograph. Landscape photography is some of the most beautiful work I can imagine. A quiet stream, a field with grazing deer, or a tree filled scene with filtered sunlight can make a most lovely shot.



There are images that automatically transport you to a calm and quiet place to sit and just take in all the beauty. The parks and refuges are here for us to use and enjoy. I try never to be without my camera when we visit.



Most digital cameras are equipped with a landscape mode if you are not comfortable using manual settings. There is no excuse not to take some shots while you are there. You will thank yourself for it when you have a glorious photo hanging on your wall that you shot yourself.

Around every turn is something wonderful. Take some time to visit the local parks and refuges and see what landscapes you can preserve in a photograph.

Until next time! Enjoy the scenery!



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.

## *“Lost Mound Update” by Ed Britton*



### **Photo voltaic system now operational:**

After two years of planning, the photo voltaic system at Lost Mound is finally operational. The long delay included contractor default, government shutdown, and several amendments to the contract. The final outcome was beneficial as we increased the solar system size from 5 kilowatts to 13 kilowatts. Future plans are to max the system at 20 kilowatts which hopefully will provide 100% of our electrical needs. Calculations show that we will pay for the photo voltaic system in energy savings in about 10 years and with a 30 year warranty, we should enjoy free electricity at Lost Mound for 20 years.



**Headstart ornates arrive:** Seventeen new ornate box turtle recruits arrived from the Lincoln Park Zoo at their new sand prairie home on June 18. Under the headstart program, the juveniles were raised at the zoo for 10 months in order to obtain a larger body size so they could avoid predation, the number one killer of hatchling turtles. Fourteen headstarts were placed inside the Turtle Corral where they joined 28 other ornates. Three headstarts were placed outside the Corral in this second year attempt to expand the ornate population to new areas. The 2013 cohort of six headstarts that were placed outside the Corral met with disappointing results as five were found dead this spring and the transmitter on the only survivor was found after glue failure. This was the first year that we have documented winter mortality in our ornate box turtle study.



**Turtlemania:** We started spring with two natural ornate box turtle nests inside the Turtle Corral. However, a masked bandit made a Mid-western omelette out of one nest. This is the first recorded predation of an ornate nest by a raccoon inside the Corral. Typically, we don't see raccoons in the middle of the sand prairie. Last year, western hog-nose snakes predated the five natural ornate nests inside the Corral despite wire protectors placed over the nests.

**Building demolition:** Great progress has been made on building demolition over the spring and summer. The last (28 total) of the B-Area black powder warehouses have been demolished. The wood roofs were re-cycled and used on a variety of local home improvement projects. Over 120,000 square feet of lumber has been recycled during this project. The tile block walls and concrete foundations were removed and the building sites are now being restored to prairie. The old cafeteria building was also demolished and prairie restoration is underway.

**Deer hunt applications available:** Applications are available from August 1-September 2 for our special deer hunt for youth and adults with disabilities. A random drawing for the 45 hunt sites will be held September 4. Last year, hunters traveled from 12 states to participate in this special hunting event.

## *“Young Birders Explore the Refuge” by Ethan Brown*



On June 14 and 15th I joined 23 birders, ages 8-16, from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin for the IA/IL Young Birders Mississippi Weekend. With parents and leaders there were almost 50 of us birding the Upper Mississippi River Refuge hotspots. The fun started at the Palisades State Park where I met 23 kids about my age that are as crazy about birds as I am. And Mom thought I was the only one! We split into two groups and birded the Palisades State Park and Lost Mound Unit in Illinois and the Green Island Wildlife Management area in Iowa. Even though it was windier than heck and the gnats were swarming like crazy, we saw over 100 species of birds. I even added a bird to my life-list that I had been trying to find for weeks, the Blue-winged Warbler. That night we had pizza at Manny's and Rachel Butek, the 2010 ABA Young Birder of the Year talked to us about how she got started birding. At dusk we all met at Lost Mound Unit for the Owl Prowl with Bob Walton. We heard Nighthawks, Whip-poor-wills and a couple of Barred Owls answered Bob's calls. That Bob sure does sound like an owl, but look out I've been practicing! Sunday morning my group went birding at Green Island and our most interesting birds were Sandhill Cranes, Trumpeter Swans and a Least Bittern. The other group birded the restricted area of Lost Mound Unit and were excited to report Loggerhead Shrikes, Northern Mockingbirds, Blue Grosbeaks and Bald Eagles locking their talons together and tumbling. We ended our awesome weekend back at the Palisades State Park with a Subway lunch and a lot of good birding stories and new friends. I want to say thank you to the IA & IL Young Birders for their donation to our Jr. Stewards Program. I also want to thank authors Richard Crossley and Margaret A. Barker for the signed books, Eagle Optics for the lens cleaning kits, Rachel Butek for the interesting bird talk, Connie, Bob and Dennis for the Lost Mound tours, Wendy & the crew at Manny's, Subway, all the Moms and Dads who take us birding and a big thank you to Carl Bendorf, Matthew Cvetas and Josh Engel who organized the best birding weekend ever!!



## *“This Ol Walnut Tree” by Debbie Cram*

This Ol Walnut Tree, I am currently at day 114. I am finding new beauty surrounding “This Ol Walnut Tree” everyday. We have seen days with the children chasing dragonflies and days with beautiful sunsets. The 4th of July has come and gone and we are moving towards the end of the summer. The tree is bearing her fruits already for the fall harvest and winter will soon be upon us again. I will continue to visit her daily to catch the next chapter of the seasons to come. I am still posting her daily pictures on my Facebook page. You can see them all at [https:// www.facebook.com/pages/This Ol Walnut Tree/ 1484600211756249](https://www.facebook.com/pages/This+Ol+Walnut+Tree/1484600211756249).



Day 86



Day 91



Day 105



Day 109



Day 111



Day 113

## *“Sightings Around the Refuge”*



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Michael Fitzgerald



Cottontail by Michael Fitzgerald



Cradled Sunset at Sloane Marsh by Debbie Cram



Common Yellowthroat by Steve Aram



Red-headed Woodpeckers by Stan Bousson

*“More Sightings Around the Refuge”*



*Connie Zink*

Song Sparrow by Connie Zink



White-tailed Deer by Larry and Bonnie Thoren



*Marsh mallow plants  
Green Island*

*© 2014 Larry and Bonnie Thoren*

Marsh Mallow by Larry and Bonnie Thoren



Belted Kingfisher by Steve Aran



Ben Butterworth Park in Moline by Wade and Connie Inskeep



*© Richard Cox 2014*

Monarch Caterpillar by Richard Cox

*“Even More Sightings Around the Refuge”*



© Stan Bousson

Red-headed Woodpecker by Stan Bousson



©Michael Fitzgerald

Purple Martin by Michael Fitzgerald



Great Egret by Stan Bousson



Connie Zink

Red Admiral by Connie Zink



Ethan Brown

Green Heron by Jr. Steward Ethan Brown

Schedule of Events



Camera and Solar Panel Installation on Island



Lock and Dam 13 by Wade and Connie Inskip

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

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)

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

Thursday, September 4th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Saturday, September 6th—Kid's Fishing Day 9:00 am - 12:00 pm (Frog Pond)

Saturday, September 13th "Monthly Bird Walk" 9:00 am- 11:00 am

Saturday, September 13th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 2:00 pm- 6:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office by 1:45)

Thursday, September 18th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00 am- 10:00 am

Friday, September 19th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

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



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge

815-273-2732

Primary Business Address stewardsumrr@gmail.com

Check out our Website: www.stewardsumrr.org



Like us on Facebook

Membership Form

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

Form fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone, and Email.

Membership Categories

- Membership categories and prices: 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.

## 3rd Annual



### Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Saturday, August 16

Armed with GPS units, teams, will “race” by attempting to complete a series of challenges located on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Teams will be given a set of coordinates for a specific location which they will find using a handheld GPS unit. Once at that location, teams must work together to complete a task. When that task is successfully completed, teams will receive the next set of coordinates for the next location. Those who finish all tasks and arrive at the finish first, win!

Sound like fun? You may bring your own GPS unit or borrow one for the day. The event will begin at the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center located at 7071 Riverview Rd, Thomson, IL 61285. Prior to the race, we will hold an introductory GPS course at 8:00 a.m. to learn how to use the unit. The race will then begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude around noon.

Registration is required for the race! A team is comprised of a minimum of 2 people and a maximum of 6. Teams will be driving and walking to get to their designations.

Registration deadline is August 14th. Call 815-273-2732 ext. 116 or email [pam\\_steinhaus@fws.gov](mailto:pam_steinhaus@fws.gov) to register or receive more information. There is no cost to enter and is open to all ages.

