



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



The Pelican Scoop

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New Members

Rudy Vierecki

Shannon Leslie



Mallards by Connie and Wade Inskeep

Message From The President

I hope everyone had a great holiday season. As much as I love the holidays, I am always anxious to get started on new and exciting projects for the upcoming year. January 17th, was the beginning of our weekly Bald Eagle Viewing Van Tours every Saturday through March 7th. The tours run 2:00 to 5:00 pm and our destinations are subject to change according to the number of Bald Eagles in the area. Our tour last Saturday, was at Lost Mound Unit and we saw approximately twenty-five Bald Eagles scattered along the edges of the Mississippi River. One of the highlights, was also over sixty White-tailed Deer roaming the prairies of Lost Mound. If you

have a chance, please sign up for one of our Saturday Bald Eagle Tours. Space is extremely limited so please call 815-273-2732 to sign up now.

A new project for this year will start on Saturday, March 14th. Our second Saturday of the month Lost Mound Unit Tour, will focus on more of the history of the "Old Savanna Army Depot" along with the birding and wildlife there. Our third Sunday of the month tour of Lost Mound, will remain focused on birding. If you would like to learn more about "The Sand Prairie" and the history of this region please join us the second Saturday of each month for a four hour tour. Some of the recent winter birding highlights of Lost Mound Unit has been a



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL

Golden Eagle, a Merlin, Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Shrikes, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Northern Harrier, Pileated Woodpeckers, and Trumpeter Swans. Looking forward to seeing some of you on our upcoming tours. Until next time, hoping you have a chance to enjoy nature each and every day.



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL

Anne's Birding Corner



Pine Siskin by Anne Straight

A small dark finch, the Pine Siskin has a thin, pointed bill. They have heavy dark streaking on the body and yellow on the wings and at the base of their notched tail.

Pine Siskins breed in Canada, the northern United States, and western mountains of the United States, where it commonly nests in conifer forests. This irregular winter finch will visit the southern and central

part of the United States and northern Mexico in years with good seed crops. This seed-eater is a common winter visitor to feeders and also feeds on conifers and forages in fields, shrubs, and weeds.

Backwater Birding with Bob

Golden eagles have dark brown feathers over their entire body, with golden feathers on the nape, or back of the neck. The beak is tri-colored; black at the tip, grayish-blue in the mid-section and yellow at the base. Their legs are feathers to the toes.

Juvenile golden eagles have distinct white patches near the wrist on the underside of the wing and a wide white band in the tail.



Carol Knabe

Photos and information –
National Eagle Center

Following a rather mild December, winter has certainly established its presence in January with sub-zero temperatures and arctic wind chills. In spite of the frigid weather, a January birding adventure can be quite rewarding in terms of viewing spectacular winter birds and other wildlife, prism colored sun dogs, and crystal coated landscapes normally only found on Christmas cards.

The key to locating birds in January is finding suitable habitat which includes food, water, and winter shelter. Throughout January, some of the largest concentrations of Bald Eagles can be found below the Lock and Dams on the Mississippi River. Constant turbulence from the dam's rollers keeps the water open for several hundred yards downstream. Oxygen deprived Gizzard Shad congregate in the open water, creating an easy food supply for the eagles, gulls, mergansers, and diving ducks. The floodplain forests of mostly silver maples and cottonwoods provide excellent cover, daytime perches, and evening roosting sites, thus completing the habitat needs for eagles.

Mid-January is a good time

to travel roadways adjacent to native prairie areas and newly established grasslands to view Short-eared Owls. Dusk and dawn are the best times to observe these ground roosting birds as they search for mice in the grasslands with a low, swallow-like flight pattern. Scanning the same grasslands during daylight hours will usually reveal hovering Rough-legged Hawks, another large raptor from the north that migrates to Iowa and Illinois for the winter.

January is also a great time to head to one of the floodplain refuges and strap on some snow shoes or cross country skis. My favorite destination is the Pleasant Creek Refuge between Green Island and Bellevue. The refuge features a level 4 ½ mile trail that winds through a bottomland forest of hickory and oak trees, in addition to silver maples and cottonwoods. This forest provides excellent cover and is a winter food source for a wide variety of wildlife. Besides coyotes and otter, it is common to encounter Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and two of my favorite little winter birds—Brown Creepers and Winter



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Wrens. Another good winter hiking trail is the trail at the Thomson Recreation Area that heads to the Duck Foot Marsh.

Lesser traveled, hard-surfaced roads can also offer excellent birding at this time of year. Following a snowstorm, the windswept shoulders are often teeming with hundreds of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings. Two of my favorite roads are County Road D61 from Otter Creek, Iowa to Bellevue, Iowa, and the roadways surrounding the Thomson Prison.

I encourage everyone to bundle up, grab binoculars, and head to one of our many public natural areas to enjoy the solitude and the artistry of the winter landscape. Good luck and have a Great Birding New Year!



American Robin by Connie Zink



Tundra Swans by Dave Watts

The winters here are always filled with glorious pictures of the hundreds of Bald Eagles that gather at the lock and dams. Although they make for great subjects for pictures, you should always be on the lookout for something that doesn't appear often or appears at the wrong time of year.

In December when Wade and I would do our normal loop around the Mississippi River from Illinois to Iowa, we saw a Long Tailed Duck which we have never spotted at that area before. That sighting made the Iowa Rare Bird Alert at that time.

I have heard lately that the Snowy Owls are showing up closer and closer to our area than in the past. I have never seen one and it would be thrilling to get some photos. It is only a matter of time until I can add that particular beauty to our life list.

This month, at Lock and Dam #14, there have been sightings of Great Black-Backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Thayers Gull and an Iceland Gull. All but one of these would be a lifer for us. These sightings were reported to the Iowa Rare Bird Alert for the first two weeks of January 2015.

I can't stress enough that when you are out visiting your local wildlife refuge to keep your eyes out for birds and animals that are out of the ordinary. If you have a camera with you, take pictures for a proper identification. If you do find a rare bird or animal for your area, make sure to report the sighting.

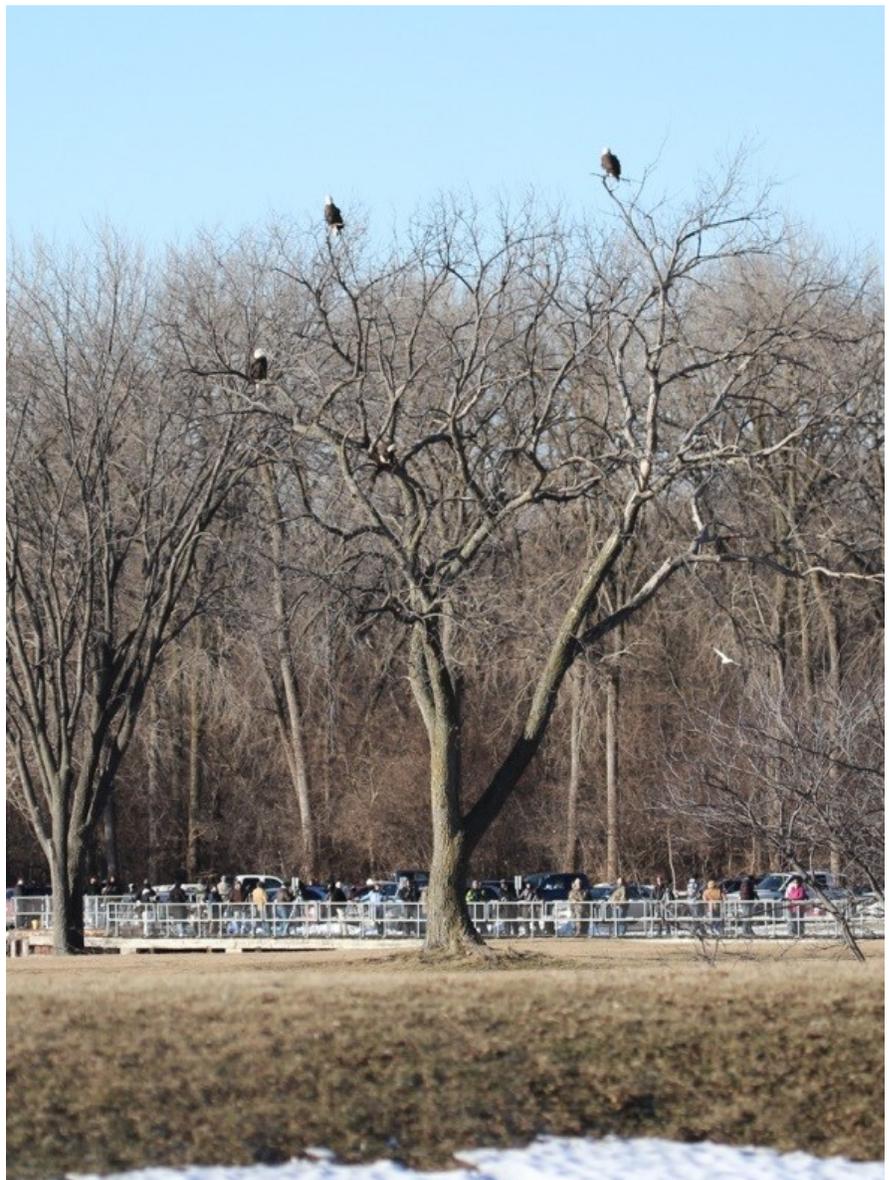
We went out this morning to find any of the gulls that have been spotted at Lock and Dam 14 with no luck. There were several eagles fishing which made the trip worthwhile. We were not alone by any means.

Until next time, get out and enjoy your local wildlife refuge in the winter!

Flash Point - "Always Watching For Something Different"



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



“Taming the Mighty Mississippi” by Ed Britton

Mankind has attempted to tame the mighty Mississippi River for nearly 200 years. However, Mother Nature has often trumped these efforts to tame her river. Savanna is one of hundreds of river towns that experience both the wrath and the rewards of this great river.



Thousands of physical alterations have been constructed along the 2,300 miles of the Mississippi River. The first levee was built near New Orleans in 1717. The great flood of 1927 resulted in shortening and straightening over 150 miles of the Lower River to reduce flood risk.

Each natural event that causes flooding usually results in new engineering structures that will lessen the impacts of the next flood. Two centuries of altering river flows have made progress in minimizing flood impacts.

The Mississippi River is a wild place. It produces a world class fishery, is an internationally important migratory bird flyway, and contains a diversity of habitats that support a large assemblage of wildlife species. The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge extends along 261 miles of the river and contains 240,000 acres.

The Upper and Lower Rivers are very different. On the Upper Mississippi River, we enjoy lake-like conditions due to the presence of 29 locks and dams. These massive dams manage water levels to maintain a nine-foot navigation channel for commercial barge traffic. Thousands of smaller wing dams jut out from the shoreline to deflect flowing water into the main channel. Boaters unfamiliar with the river often learn the hard way that these wingdams lie hidden just below the water's surface.

Lock and Dam 13 is located on Clinton's north shore below the bluffs at Eagle Point Park. This dam controls water levels in Pool 13 that extends 34 miles to the north. There are 13 large steel gates extending over 1,000 feet across the river that are operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for managing water levels to accommodate barge traffic. The lock allows the passage of vessels up and down the river by equalizing the 11 foot difference in water levels above and below the dam.

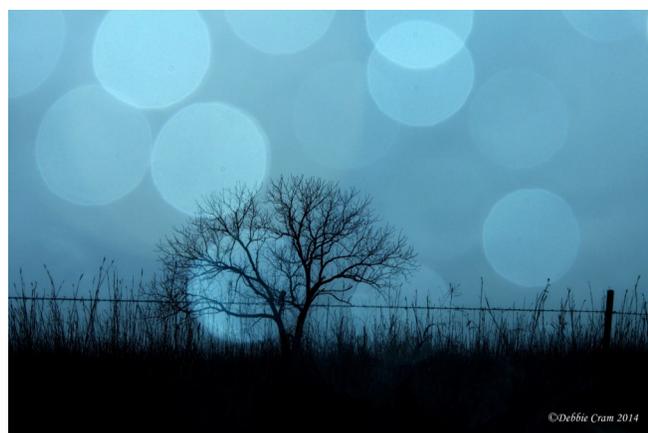
The Lower Mississippi River is a wilder open river, having no locks and dams, with fast flowing currents. Many shorelines and some channel bottoms are lined with concrete revetment to minimize damage due to the fast flowing river. The dangerous currents are not conducive to recreation which is an important asset on the Upper River.

We are privileged to have one of the greatest natural resources in the world being a part of Savanna. The river showcases a nationally significant commercial waterway, a nationally scenic recreation area, and a nationally important wildlife area. Savanna is part of an elite group of Mississippi River communities where wildness is still an important asset of our mighty Mississippi.



“This Ol Walnut Tree ” by Debbie Cram

The New Year has arrived and new beginnings for This Ol Walnut Tree are in store. November and December were pretty mild but January looks to be coming in with a cold sweep. I will be going to Dubai for the majority of the cold days ahead and will miss all of those cold bitter days. I will also be missing my daily visit with This Ol Walnut Tree. We are so connected and being away from her will be sad. I promise our journey together will continue after I return in February just in time for Valentines day. Until then I wish peace and love to everyone.



Winners of the 2015 "Bald Eagle Days Photo Contest"



Left:

The 1st "Clinton Bald Eagle Day Photo Contest" was held on January 10th at Clinton Community College. The winner of "The People's Choice Award" went to: "Flying Through A Snowstorm" by JR Bodkin

Below:

1st Place in the DSLR Category: Mike Trahan



Below:

1st Place in the Point and Shoot Category: Connie Zink



Above:

1st Place in the Youth Category: Ethan Brown

“Winners of the Bald Eagle Photo Contest Continued”



Left:
2nd Place in the DSLR Category:
Alan Stankevitz

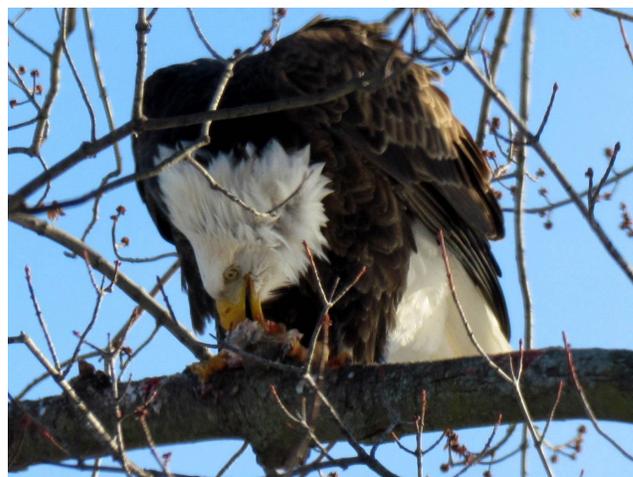
Right:
2nd Place in the Point and Shoot Category: Connie Zink



Left:
3rd Place in the DSLR Category: Alan Stankevitz



Right:
3rd Place in the Point and Shoot Category: Jennie Willcox



“Bald Eagle Photo Contest Honorable Mentions”



Mike Trahan



Chuck Hunnicutt



Chuck Hunnicutt



Wade Inskeep



David Hildestad



David Hildestad

“Bald Eagle Photo Contest Honorable Mentions”



Paula Scherbroeck



JR Bodkin



Michael Fitzgerald



Steve Thompson



Michael Fitzgerald



Alan Stankevitz

Thank you to all the photographers that entered the 2015 Bald Eagle Photo Contest.

Carl Latchford

Ethan Brown

Cindy Brown

Christine Gitz

Gary Hoard

Robert Schafer

John Vaughn

Denise Greer

Alan Stankevitz

Connie Zink

Jennie Wilcox

Roger Husband

Juliet D'Souza

Sally Bolton

Dave Watts

Joyce Paustian

Micheal Fitzgerald

Bob Esbensen

Lawrence Williams

Andrew Elgin

Steven Thompson

Paul Brown

James Bodkin

Mary Jo Whalen-Monaghan

Eric Pohl

Robert Smice

Kim LaFayette-Fick

David Hildestad

Wade Inskeep

Paula Scherbroeck

Michelle Hohol

Debbie Meyer

Paul Brooks

Barb Larson

Chuck Hunnicutt

John Branch

Mike Trahan

Greg Moran

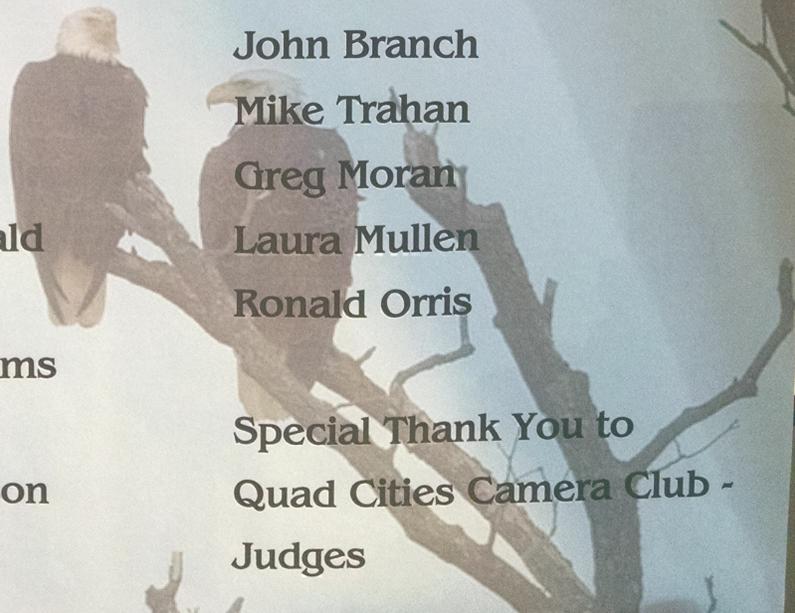
Laura Mullen

Ronald Orris

Special Thank You to

Quad Cities Camera Club -

Judges



2015 Clinton Bald Eagle Watch Highlights



Schedule of Events



Bald Eagles by Dave Watts



Rough-legged Hawk by Larry and Bonnie Thoren

Saturday, January 24th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, January 31st "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, February 7th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, February 14th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Sunday, February 15th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office by 12:45)

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

Saturday, February 21st "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, February 28th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, March 7th "Bald Eagle Viewing Tour" 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Ingersoll Center at 1:45 pm)

Saturday, March 14th "Lost Mound History and Wildlife Tour" 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office 12:45)

Sunday, March 15th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (Meet at Lost Mound Unit Office by 12:45)

Friday, March 20th 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



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.