



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



The Pelican Scoop

Inside this issue:

<i>Backwater Birding with Bob</i>	2
<i>Using Props in Your Photography by Connie Inskeep</i>	3
<i>Deer in Rut - by Ed Britton</i>	4
<i>Jr. Stewards Chatter</i>	5
<i>Jr. Stewards Photography Challenge (other photos in other sections)</i>	8
<i>Schedule of Events and Membership Form</i>	9
<i>Clinton Bald Eagle Watch</i>	10

New Members

Jacquelynn Vesely

Renewed Members

Dave Watts



Bufflehead by Anne Straight

Message from Visitor Services Manager

Merry Christmas, I'm filling in for our President and wanted to express my sincere appreciation for the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge. Whether you're a financial supporter or one that volunteers your time and talent, you are appreciated. Stewards were busy this year by upgrading the camera at Sloane Marsh, provide birding tours into Lost Mound, Refuge golf cart tours and give support at many special events, just naming a few. We have been working on getting the Eagle Cam back in operation but that hasn't been an easy task. But then again, it has been a challenge since 2011. If it isn't equipment problems then the eagles don't cooperate. Will 2016 be the year? Time will

tell. The Jr. Stewards program just finished its 4th year and will be starting our 5th season in February. It's been so much fun working with this group of kids and their parents. This newsletter highlights this program and what the kids learned.



Pam Steinhaus

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year.



Front: Remington Anderson, Brennon Anderson, Aden Randolph, Dallas Bunn
Middle: Wyatt Wollam, Emma Swiderski, Brennon Cavanagh, Madison McClelland, Ethan Brown, Shayla Roberts
Back: Sophia Guenzler, Jacob McLuckie, Geneva Zach, Allison Zimmerman

Anne's Birding Corner

A diver, the Bufflehead is a small duck around 13-14 inches. The male is mostly white with a black back and large black head with a large white patch. When closer the black head shows green and purple gloss hues. The females are dark gray with a white cheek patch.

These birds are found in

lakes, ponds and rivers. It dives for mollusks, aquatic insects and crustaceans. The Bufflehead breeds in northern Canada and Alaska. It nests in cavities in the forest created by woodpeckers near water. It winters to the south in the United States, Mexico and the Gulf Coasts on rivers, bays and lakes.



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL

Backwater Birding with Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Now that winter has announced its presence with the first snowfall and bitter northerly winds, most birders retire to the comfort of their homes and confine their bird-watching to spying at birds feasting at well supplied feeders. Admittedly, I too spend a lot of time observing my home feeders that we keep well stocked with black oil sunflower seeds. In addition to all our year round residents, we also attract Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-throated Sparrows, Common Redpolls, and lots of Northern Juncos.

Venturing outside during December and January can be rewarding. The leafless forests are transformed into winter wonderlands with snow and crystal coated landscapes ornamented by spectacular birdlife. The key to finding birds in December and January is finding natural food sources, areas of open water, and areas that offer protection from wind. Stands of conifers, sheltered bluffs and tracts of thick backwater, floodplain forests will usually harbor good populations of winter birds.

We are fortunate to have 5 lock and dams within the Savanna District of the National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The constant turbulence from the dam's rollers keeps the water open for several hundred yards downstream even in the worst of winters. Oxygen deprived Gizzard Shad concentrate in the open water, creating a veritable smorgasbord for Bald Eagles, gulls and waterfowl.

Late December and January are also great times to strap on snowshoes or cross-country skis and head to the floodplain

forests. My favorite winter destination is Pleasant Creek Unit. Following the closure of the Iowa deer season, the refuge is virtually devoid of people. It has a 4.5 mile trail that winds through river bottom forests of mature oak and hickory trees, providing an excellent food source for a wide variety of wildlife. There are Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and two of my favorite little winter birds—Brown Creepers and Winter Wrens. On several occasions I've encountered River Otter, Grey Fox, and Coyotes.

Lesser traveled, hard-surfaced roads can 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. Some great roads are County Road D61 from Highway 61 at Otter Creek, Iowa, to Bellevue, Iowa, McIntyre Road in the Lost Mound Refuge, and Sand Ridge Road near Thomson, Illinois.

Mid-January is also a good time to survey areas of native prairie grass and newly established CRP grasslands for Short-eared Owls. Dusk and dawn are the best times to observe these ground roosting birds as they search for mice with slow, swallow-like flights. An evening search of small stands of pines or cedars may reveal other winter visitors like Long-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Bundle up, grab your binoculars and head to one of our many local, public, natural areas. You will enjoy the solitude and the artistry of the Mid-

west's winter landscapes, and may just find that bird of a life time. Good luck and have a Happy Birding New Year.

Here is a quick list of winter attractions:

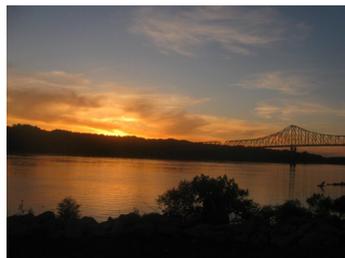
December 1-20: Search open areas of the river for diving ducks and Tundra Swans, especially in the Spring Lake Refuge and the Lock and Dam 13 area.

December 20-30: Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings, and maybe even a few Meadowlarks should be along lesser traveled roadways.

January 1-31: Eagles will accumulate in large numbers below the lock and dams. Mergansers, Goldeneyes, and other diving ducks will be in warm water discharge areas and pockets of open water in the channel of the Mississippi.



Sunset by Jacob McLuckie



Sunset by Shayla Roberts



Wildlife by Madison McClelland



Sunset—Geneva Zack



Macro Shot by Remington Anderson

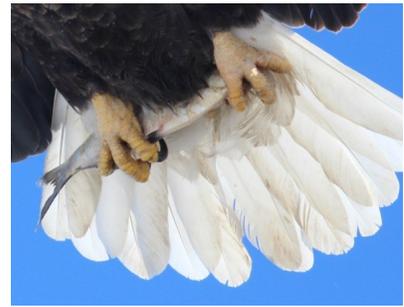
Flash Point— “Take Advantage”

It is hard to believe that the Holidays are here already! I hope everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving and are looking forward to Christmas and the New Year.

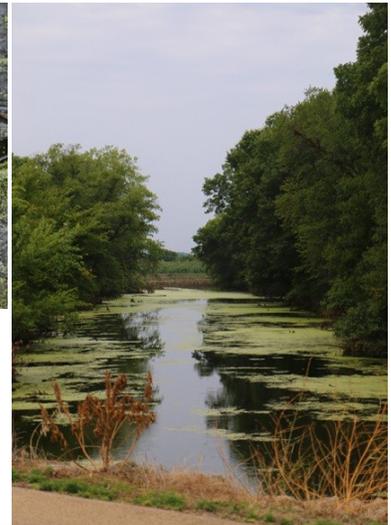
It has been a busy year for us and we haven't gotten out as much as we would have liked to enjoy the parks in our area. It makes me sad because I know I have missed a lot during migration (both spring and fall).



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



We appreciate so much that the US Fish and Wildlife Service preserve and protect these lands so we and our future generations will know the beauty that are our parks and recreational areas. We also want to thank the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge for volunteering their time to get the word out that these places are there for all to learn about and enjoy.



‘Deer in Rut’ by Ed Britton



The white-tailed deer rut was at its peak with a monster buck aggressively pursuing a fleeing doe. A clash of antlers from the nearby woods diverted the buck's attention. An intruder's grunt bellowed off in the distance and signaled that a rival buck was in his territory and must be challenged. That fateful decision resulted in 11 bucks becoming Thanksgiving dinner for the hunters that trailed them.

On November 14-15, a special deer hunt was held for a special group of hunters. Quadriplegics, paraplegics, amputees, and other physically challenged hunters participated in the ninth annual deer hunt held for sportsmen/women with disabilities at Lost Mound Unit of Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge in Savanna, Illinois.

This hunt was held a week prior to Illinois' First Firearms Deer Season and was conducted in areas not open to public hunting. Night-lighting surveys showed the deer population was high.

The 76 hunters travelled from 14 states and each had a unique life story. An Iraq war veteran from Tennessee had been shot five times. A Pennsylvania hunter was paralyzed after falling from a tree stand while deer hunting. An Illinois hunter had a leg amputated after a motorcycle crash.

Despite these physical challenges, the hunters were eager to participate in this unique deer hunt. Several trophy bucks were taken, the largest being an 11 pointer with a field dressed weight of 174 pounds. Total harvest was 24 deer that included 13 does and 11 bucks.

Lost Mound occupies 10,000 acres of the shuttered Savanna Army Depot. The Depot opened in 1918 as a munitions testing range for artillery made at Rock Island Arsenal. It became one of America's largest munitions storage sites until its closure in 2001.

Most of this former military base is closed to public access due to ongoing environmental clean-up activities. Contaminated sites include a burial area for defective World War I hand grenades that exploded without delay when the pin was pulled. Other sites include mustard gas burial areas and unexploded ordnance hidden on the landscape. Hunters and their helpers must undergo a safety orientation and abide by special access rules.

Hunters were required to use non-lead ammunition for this special hunt in order to reduce lead exposure to bald eagles. Hundreds of bald eagles congregate at Lost Mound and multiple lead exposure cases have been documented. Motion sensor cameras showed that bald eagles feed on waste deer parts discarded in the field and on fatally wounded but not retrieved deer. X-rays identified that lead bullet fragments were present in these waste parts.

Many of the hunters have switched to copper slugs and muzzle-loader bullets for all of their deer hunting based on their experience at Lost Mound. They were concerned by the connection of lead ammunition to lead exposure in eagles, and the performance of copper bullets showed they were effective for harvesting deer.



Jr. Stewards Chatter - The Year in Review

2015 Jr. Stewards season has been a fantastic year with 14 youth (with parents) taking part. We would like to thank the various businesses that support the Jr. Stewards program: Solutions from Science, JC Carey, Manny's Pizza, Shepherd's Landscaping, Tim Voltz - State Farm, Powerlab, Milo and Beavers and Engels Jewelry.



Shawn Wegmann, 3rd Grade, Clinton IA
Saturday, **February 7th** at Junior Stewards, we watched nature intro. videos. We also talked about snowshoeing. Then we went snowshoeing for a long time. I think we also had a good snack. I liked the first Junior Stewards session.



Emma Swiderski, 6th grade Savanna, IL

Jr. Stewards visited the Thomson Causeway with Ben Vandermyde on Saturday, **March 7**. Ben is a forester with the Corps of Engineers and gave us a lesson on winter tree identification. We learned how to identify trees and even used a borer to take a sample to determine the age of the tree. We also learned to identify poison ivy in the winter by looking for the yellow buds.



Yes, you can identify a tree in the winter.



Counting growth rings



Aden getting one on one time with Connie Inskeep



Wyatt and Beth practicing what they learned from Stan

Madison McClelland, 5th Grade
Fulton, IL

On Saturday, **April 11th**, the Jr Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge learned how to photograph wildlife. We got a lot of helpful tips from other Steward photographers. One tip was the morning light is called the golden hour. We also worked on composition while using the Rule of 3rds. Walking around the refuge gave us many opportunities to practice.

Jr. Stewards Chatter - The Year in Review continues...

Kathleen Ziemer, Butterfliz of Iowa was our special speaker for the **May 2nd**, session. We learned a lot about butterflies and moths. We learned that both the moth and butterfly make a chrysalis but the moth spins a cocoon to protect itself through the winter. Kathleen demonstrated how water repellent their wings are as she placed a butterfly under the water and came out dry. Each Jr. was also given a container of painted lady butterfly larva to raise. They were to document the process and record it in their journal.



Sophia Guenzler, 6th Grade Savanna, IL

Jr. Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, met on Saturday, **June 6th** and learned about America's Least Wanted. We watched a video about invasive species, such as Lamprey/bloodsucker of the sea, garlic mustard, silver carp, fish hook flea, and many more. Then we played a game to see what we learned and then headed out to the prairie and dug out invasive species such as alfalfa and sweet clover.

Wyatt Wollam, 4th grade Fenton, IL

At the Jr. Stewards **July 11** session, our planned canoe trip had to be canceled due to inclement weather. Our program's director, Pam Steinhaus, had a backup plan: geocaching! Geocaching is like a treasure or scavenger hunt, which uses a GPS device, to receive coordinates or "waypoints" to locate caches. Biologists use GPS to track, study, and monitor, wildlife, where and how they live, their habits and land usage, which better aids in conservation decisions. Jr. Steward members used GPS remotes and a list of clues to locate "caches" hidden around the grounds of Ingersoll Wetland's Learning Center and the Prairie, which once found, were a series of activities or questions to be answered. Despite the rainy weather, we had a great time!



Jr. Stewards Chatter - The Year in Review continues...

We met along the rivers edge, for our **August** session, just north of Cordova, IL at the home of Mike and Martha Samples. Jon Duyvejonk with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services met us and led on an underwater adventure. We learned about the history of mussels, the issues that they face today and were able to do a little pollywagen. We found 15 different species including the federally endangered Higgen's Eye.



Brennon Cavanagh 7th grade, Savanna, IL

On **September 12th** was Kids Fishing Day at Frog Pond just south of Savanna. We had a presentation by Jeramiah Haas, Fisheries Biologist with Exelon. He taught us about the fish we might see in the water. Then, we went fishing! We fished for largemouth bass, sunfish, bluegill, and crappie. It was a wonderful day to go fishing!

Shayla Roberts, 7th grade Savanna, IL

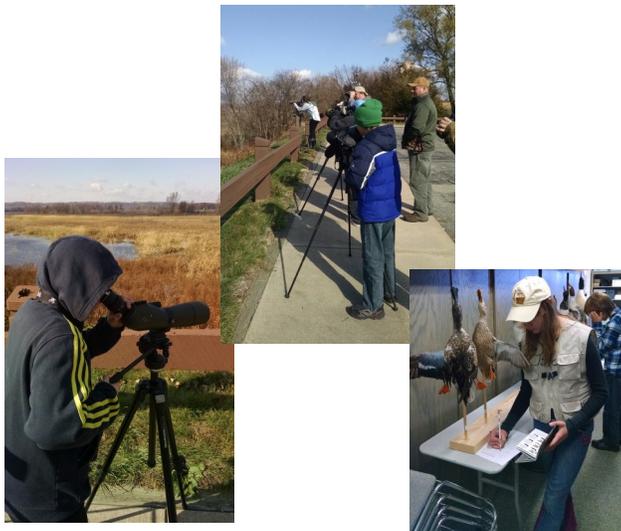
On Saturday **October 3**, the Junior Stewards collected milkweed and butterfly weed. We first learned a little bit about how to identifying the plants, then searched the surrounding sand prairie to find the seed pods. We de-fluffed the seeds and then made seed bombs from the seeds and dirt. Once finished we threw our seed bombs throughout the prairie.



Dallas Bunn 4th grade, Savanna IL

November 7, the Jr. Stewards met at Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center to learn about waterfowl.

Dallas writes: We talked about migration of birds and many kinds of ducks. Divers wings are black and white and Dabblers wings are colorful. We did a duck ID Quiz and can tell a youngster from an elder, and female from male. We bird watched and was so much fun today.



“Jr. Stewards Photography Challenge”



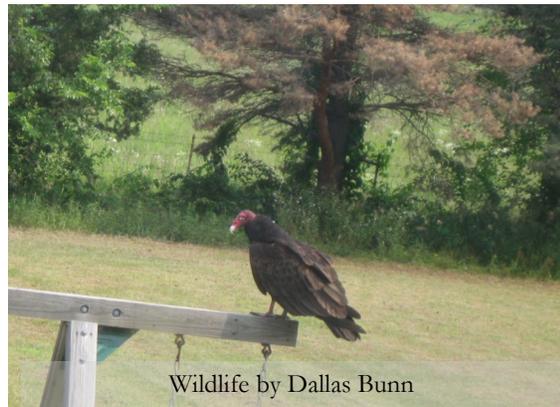
Butterfly by Brennon Cavanagh



Wildlife by Wyatt Wollam



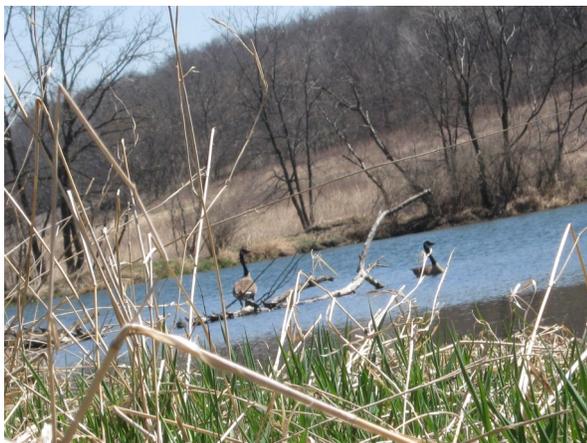
Macro by Ethan Brown



Wildlife by Dallas Bunn



Macro shot by Brennon Anderson



Wildlife by Sophia Guenzler



Landscape by Emma Swiderski



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
by Stan Bousson



Red-headed Woodpecker
by Stan Bousson

Schedule of Events

Saturday, January 9th “Clinton Bald Eagle Watch”
See flier in the back for more details

Friday, January 15th Monthly Stewards Potluck
and Christmas Party 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Saturday, February 13th “Monthly Bird Walk”
9:00 am– 11:00 am (Meet at Sloane Marsh)

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

Saturday, March 12th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00
am– 11:00 am (Meet at Sloane Marsh)

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

Please check Calendar of Events on the Website
for new events.

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



Landscape by Allison Zimmerman



Butterfly by Aden Randolph



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge

7071 Riverview Rd
Thomson, IL 61285

815-273-2732
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.

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

Membership Categories

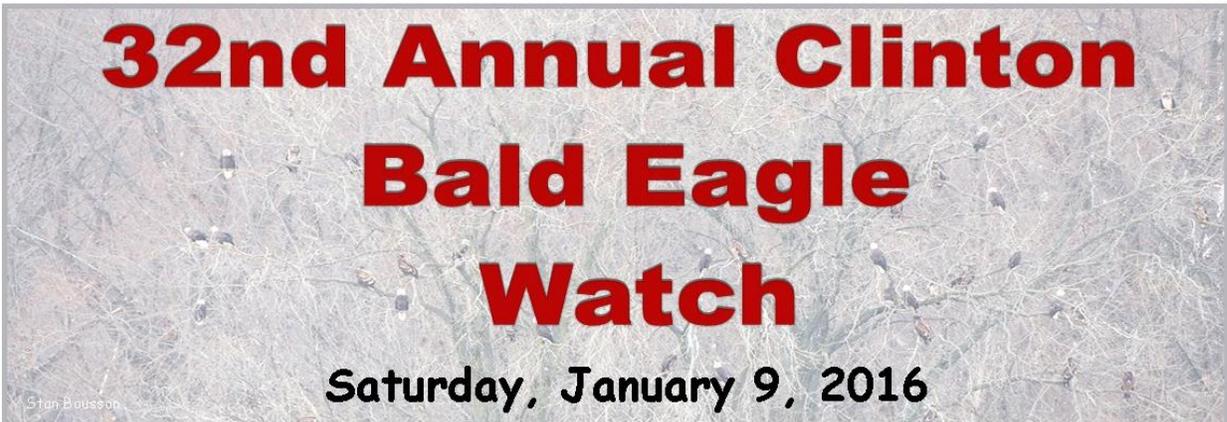
- Blazing Star (Student) \$5
- Yellow-headed Blackbird (Individual) \$10
- Ornate Box Turtle (Family) \$20
- Sandhill Crane (Supporter) \$100
- Osprey (Corporate) \$250
- Bald Eagle (Lifetime) \$1,000

Mail completed form to SUMRR:

7071 Riverview Rd
Thomson, IL 61285
www.stewardsumrr.org



Make a difference and
Join today.



Clinton, Iowa & Fulton, Illinois

Schedule of Events

8:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m.	<i>Eagle Watching at Lock and Dam #13, Fulton, IL., five miles north of Fulton, IL. off Highway 84.</i>
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.	<i>Free Educational Programs & Exhibits Bald Eagle Photo Contest Clinton Community College, 1000 Lincoln Blvd., Clinton, IA.</i>
9:30 a.m.	Welcome —Trevor Popkin, US Corps of Engineers, Pam Steinhaus US Fish and Wildlife Service
9:45 a.m.	"Live Birds of Prey" - Bald Eagle and other raptors Kay Neumann and Terrie Hoefler—SOAR, Dedham, IL
11:15 a.m.	Who Lives with Eagles? David Stokes, Naturalist - West Berlin, IL
12:50 p.m.	Peoples Choice — Photo Contest winner announced
1:00 p.m.	"Live Birds of Prey" - Bald Eagle and other raptors

Programs and Exhibits will feature: Live Animals, Exhibits, Puppets, Song, Food and Drinks.
People's Choice—Bald Eagle Photo Contest



- Free Courtesy Bus Service from the College to Lock and Dam 13 viewing area. (Wiersema Charter Bus Service)
- Refreshments available at the Dam.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CALL:
US Fish and Wildlife Service (815)273-2732
US Army Corps of Engineers—(815)259-3628

