



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



The Pelican Scoop

Inside this issue:

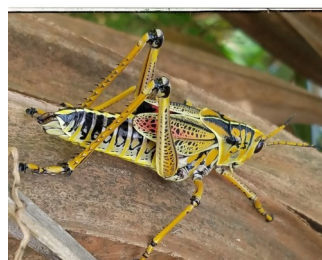
<i>Backwater Birding with Bob</i>	2
<i>Flash Point</i>	3
<i>Jr. Stewards Chatter</i>	4
<i>Jr. Stewards Chatter Continues</i>	5
<i>Wings on the Water</i>	6
Clinton Bald Eagle Watch	7
Eagle Trio Nest	8
Birding Guide	8
<i>Schedule of Events and Membership Form</i>	9

Renewed Members

Mary Blackmore



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Alex Peterson



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Ana Cunningham

Message from the President

Happy December everyone, first off I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Stewards. It is Bald Eagle time here again on the "Upper Miss" Refuge. The Bald Eagles are starting to return to our area now in large numbers. More and more are showing up along the banks of the beautiful Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. It is definitely nature at its best! As the waters freeze along the Mississippi River, Bald Eagles will start to congregate at the locks and dams where open waters provide excellent up close and personal viewing opportunities. Please mark your calendars for Saturday, January 6th! That is the date of the 34th Annual "Bald Eagle Watch". It will be taking place at Clinton Community College and Lock and Dam 13 from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm. SOAR "Saving Our Avian Resources" will be presenting the main programs at 9:30 am and

1:00 pm. They will be bringing live raptors and a Bald Eagle for their program "Live Birds of Prey". At 10:45 am Ryan Anthony, an Eagle Biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, will present a program on the sport of falconry, its history and cultural significance, equipment and falconry in the present day. At 11:30 am David Stokes, a naturalist, humorist, and educator from New Berlin, WI, returns with his program using live creatures and animal artifacts, songs, and short stories to entertain and educate young and old alike. Naturalists and volunteers will be on hand with spotting scopes available to aid in viewing bald eagles from 8:30 am until 2:30 pm at Lock and Dam 13 in Fulton, IL. It is a great family fun-filled day and free to the public. Hope to see many of you there!

I hope some of you were able to witness another of the wonders of nature along the Mississippi River that has been taking place over the last month. Several weeks ago, due



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL.

to the warm weather, and no ice forming yet on the river, we were fortunate enough to see and hear hundreds of Tundra Swans that were resting on the Spring Lake Unit. Every year it is such an amazing site to see all of the Tundra Swans gathered together in one place. Their call is so beautiful and what an awesome opportunity to view that many all in one place. They are usually passing through the area during the month of November. If you missed them this year plan a visit to the area next year. It is worth the trip! Until next time, Happy Holidays and get out and experience nature at it's best!

Anne's Birding Corner—White-crowned Sparrow

The White-crowned Sparrow is a large sparrow that has bold black and white stripes on its head. It has a small pale bill, long tail, and a clean gray breast. In immature birds, the head has brownish and reddish coloring that they keep through the first winter.

It breeds from Canada to Alaska and in most of the northern United States. They typically spend the winter across most of North America. They can be found under

feeders and are commonly seen near the ground along grasslands, shrubby habitat, and woody areas. It feeds on seeds and insects.



White-crowned Sparrow



Anne Straight - Forreton, IL.

Backwater Birding with Bob



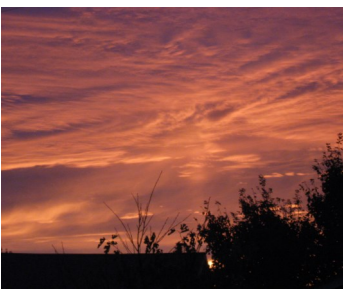
Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia.



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
by Brady Jennings



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Brennon Anderson



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Elise Legel

BACKWATER BIRDING WITH BOB—WINTER 2017

This has been an unbelievably warm winter thus far. It is difficult to pen a winter birding article when the temperature is approaching 60o on the first of December. Instead of seeing large flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos and Tree Sparrows, my backyard is still home to Golden-crowned Kinglets, and even a few Yellow-rumped Warblers. It has definitely made it a banner year for migratory waterfowl in the backwaters of the Mississippi River. On a recent trip to Spring Lake, Sloane Marsh, and the Thomson Causeway there were large numbers of warm season ducks including Wood Ducks, Teal, Northern Shovelers, and Northern Pintails. Normal late season ducks including Mallards, Gadwalls, American Wigeon, and Canvasbacks were also plentiful. Most of the Tundra Swans have vacated the Midwest for their winter home on the Chesapeake Bay.

In spite of the unusually high temperature, an “eruption” of Snowy Owls is occurring in the area. There have been several seen in the Upper Mississippi River Refuge. An “eruption” is technically an irregular movement of large numbers of a bird species following the breeding season into areas beyond their normal range, usually due to an inadequate food supply. The majority of Snowy Owls in our area are usually immature birds that have been forced south from their tundra habitat due to a shortage of lemmings, their primary food. My favorite Snowy was just north of Dubuque on the former John Deere Marsh Dike where numerous people saw it perching on the same driftwood. It took several trips to the site before I observed it less than 50 yards from the end of the dike. That was after training the spotting scope on dozens of bleach bottles, and countless white chunks of styrofoam, that all represent pretty good mimics of Snowy Owls.

Another unusual eruption is the Red Crossbills. They have been seen throughout Iowa. Crossbill eruptions usually occur when there is a shortage of their foods—pine, spruce and fir seeds. The best places to look for Crossbills are old cemeteries that have large evergreens. Red Crossbills have been seen at four different cemeteries in Dubuque. I hope that more northern birds such as Evening Grosbeaks, White-winged Crossbills, and Redpolls will soon be making their way to our birding areas.

If you are looking for a great Christmas stocking stuffer for friends and relatives, consider purchasing a Federal Migratory Bird Stamp. Proceeds from the sale of these stamps goes towards the purchase, protection, and improvement of wetland areas that are essential for the survival of waterfowl and other wildlife species.

Have a Happy Holiday season and a Great New Birding Year!



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Remmington Anderson



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
By Ethan Brown

Flash Point— “Bald Eagle Watching in the Midwest”

Every year we are fortunate enough to have large numbers of Bald Eagles arrive for the winter. They congregate around the open waters of the locks along the Mississippi River during the coldest months of the year. Here, they can catch the fish they need to sustain them through frigid months.



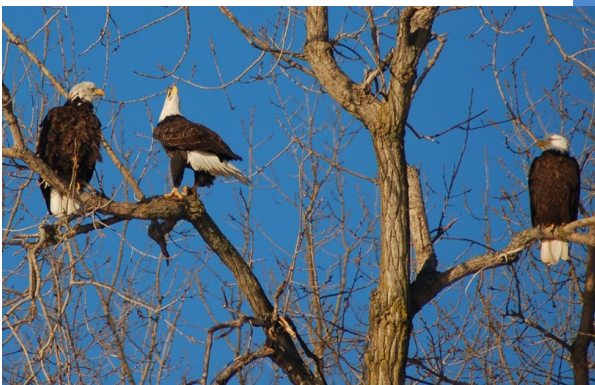
Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



The larger numbers begin arriving in late December and stay until late February or early March depending on the weather. We do have several that nest in IL and IA and stay all year round. As the population numbers for this magnificent bird increase, so do the number of birds that stay as long as their food source is plentiful to sustain them.



You are in for a treat if you can make the trip to see these wonderful creatures fish along the river and do their aerial ballets against a clear blue sky. It is a photographer's dream! Just make sure you dress appropriately, as you will not want to leave once you see them do what eagles do.



Don't forget to visit the Steward's page to see the TRIO nest cam. This is a great opportunity to see a unique trio of Bald Eagles raise their young from the comfort of your own home.

You can find the nest cam here: <http://stewardsumrr.org/webcams/bald-eagle-nest-cam-live/>

Until next time, get out and visit your nearest wildlife refuge! You won't regret it!

Jr. Stewards Chatter



Geneva Zach, 7th Grade Thomson, IL—Mussels of the Mississippi River

On August 5, 2017, the Jr. Stewards of the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge met near Cordova to monitor the mussel situation of the Mississippi River. The group discussed the old mussel industry of buttons and the recent relocation of the mussels around the bridge in the Quad Cities. They also spoke of the current threats to mussel survival, such as the invasive species of Zebra Mussels, a species that attaches to solid surfaces and chokes out the living host.

To find mussels, the group ventured into the waters of the river and withdrew many. Though the majority were common Pocket-books, we also found Pink and White Heelsplitters, Mapleleaf, Threeridge, Pimpleback, Wabash Pigtoe, Fragile Papershell, Black and Yellow Sandshell along with a few endangered Higgin’s Eye.

This expedition proved fruitful and productive. The Zebra Mussels found were removed and the mussels were returned to their habitat.



September 9th was Kids’ Fishing Day and Jr. Stewards wrapped up as one. The day started out a bit chilly but ended up a beautiful day. Thirty two kids enjoyed catching fish and of course eating the shore lunch that was sponsored by the Stewards. Jeramiah Haas, Fisheries Biologist with Exelon gave the program this year. It was a fun day.



Jr. Stewards Chatter Continued

Jr. Stewards headed to the Thomson Causeway on the evening of November 4th., for an Owl Prowl. The temperatures were cool, very little wind but lots of clouds, almost a perfect evening. Bob Walton was our special guest and did his very best to get the owls to talk. A few were conversing early but pretty quiet.



December 1st was our last session for the 2017 season. We had a great time playing games, looking at everyone's photos that they took for the scavenger hunt and eating lots of food. Plans are in motion for developing the 2018 season with an expected start date of February 3rd.



“Wings on the Water—Ed Britton”



The demise of fall colors along Clinton’s riverfront signals the seasonal migration of waterbirds is underway on the Mississippi River. The great white pelicans have moved their fish trawling operations south. Thousands of ducks, geese and swans have arrived and are performing synchronized aerial acrobatics. Magnificent bald eagles are sitting vigilantly along the shoreline, searching for their next winged cuisine.

Conservation areas along the river form a chain of pearls that provide habitat and sanctuary for waterbirds. Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge contains 240,000 acres, extends 261 contiguous miles through four states, and borders Clinton. The refuge is a designated Globally Important Bird Area and a Wetland of International Importance.

Some waterbirds are here only for a refueling stop to dine at the marsh snack bar eating high protein seeds. Others book a longer stay and feast at the all-you-can-eat buffet of fish, snails, mussels and tubers. As winter approaches and ice hardens the river, the last stragglers will head south to warmer climates. Slow moving or injured birds become dinner for the many predators that patrol the marshes.

Large numbers of waterbirds attract attention, especially by bald eagles. During winter, there are typically 500-1,000 bald eagles present within a 50 mile radius of Clinton. A favorite bald eagle hangout is Lock & Dam 13 in Fulton. The highest concentration of eagles occurs after the river channel freezes. Ice cold water pouring through the dam stuns fish and creates a floating sushi banquet in the tailwaters that is easy pickins for hungry bald eagles.

A rare bald eagle nesting trio has provided a lot of local excitement. Last spring, the two dads, one mom and two chicks were viciously attacked in the nest by two marauding bald eagles. An hour long fight ensued. Mom was never seen again, but the two dads successfully raised the chicks despite repeated attacks.

Miracles do happen, and a new eagle mom is now redecorating the high rise nest. The new mom is a robust beauty that towers over the dads (females are larger than males) and rules the roost. Eagle dads apparently don’t know how to fashionably place sticks in the nest as mom repositions each one.

A live-streaming Internet web cam is located at the eagle trio’s nest. At night, tiny white eyeball illuminations are seen scurrying around the nest, closer inspection reveals mice doing house cleaning chores. The eagles feed on much larger prey, especially coots, and don’t seem to mind their tiny furry roommates.

Another webcam is located at Lock & Dam 13 for bald eagle viewing. The webcam projects are a partnership between the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Stewards of Upper Mississippi River Refuge. The webcams can be viewed on the Stewards website: www.stewardsumrr.org.

A growing population of sandhill cranes are gathering locally in preparation for their migration south. Hundreds of cranes may gather in our area to chart their group flight south. These vegetarian and insectivorous feeders make frequent flights from the marshes to inland fields. Groups of cranes noisily chatter during their low level roundtrip flights.

We are truly fortunate to have an abundance and variety of waterbirds at our back door. It provides a great opportunity to view many species of ducks, geese, swans and cranes. Take the time to come down to the river and enjoy the winged migration before Ole Man Winter turns the river into an ice arena.



Stan Bousson

34th Annual Clinton Bald Eagle Watch

Saturday, January 6, 2018

Stan Bousson

Clinton, Iowa & Fulton, Illinois

Schedule of Events

- 8:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m. *Eagle Watching at Lock and Dam #13, Fulton, IL., five miles north of Fulton, IL. off Highway 84.*
- 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. *Free Educational Programs & Exhibits
Clinton Community College, 1000 Lincoln Blvd., Clinton, IA.*
- 9:20 a.m. **Welcome**—Daniel Clark, US Corps of Engineers,
Pam Steinhaus US Fish and Wildlife Service
- 9:30 a.m. **"Live Birds of Prey" - Bald Eagle and other raptors**
Kay Neumann and Terrie Hoefer—SOAR, Dedham, IL
- 10:45 a.m. **"Falconry" - Ryan Anthony, Eagle Biologist - USFWS , Rock Island, IL**
- 11:30 a.m. **Who Lives with Eagles?**
David Stokes, Naturalist - New Berlin, WI
- 1:00 p.m. **"Live Birds of Prey" - Bald Eagle and other raptors**
Kay Neumann and Terrie Hoefer—SOAR, Dedham, IL

Programs and Exhibits will feature: Live Animals, Exhibits, Puppets, Song, Food and Drinks.
Speakers are sponsored by Lyondell—Basell and Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



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



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Rock Island District

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



Bald Eagle Trio Nest—Pam Steinhaus



It's been several months since we have updated you on the activities at the Trio Nest. Let me get you caught up on this interesting saga (short version). When we left you at the end of March, the nest was under attack daily and both the males were diligently feeding and raising the young. Hope never returned to the nest and she was never found. The two eaglets successfully fledged from the nest and now experiencing all the growing pains that eagles must face. Winter will be their first big challenge in survival. How good are they at catching their own food or better yet stealing from another successful hunter? Time will tell.

At the end of the nesting season the big questions that we were asking were: Will the Valors attract a new female, will they split and set up their own nest or will they totally abandon the nest site.

Let's look at a question that is often asked, do they mate for life? Generally, yes, eagles engage in significant courtship and pair bonding behavior. Once a pair has succeeded in breeding, the pair will likely remain together for many years. However, if a mate dies or does not return to the nesting site for the breeding season, studies show that the surviving eagle (in this case, both males), generally will find a new mate very quickly. The remaining mate will likely use the existing nest with a new mate because of eagles' strong nest site fidelity.

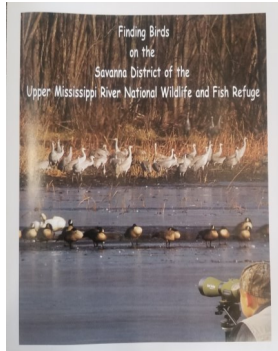
September 1st we received the answer that we were hoping for. A new female was spotted with both of the Valors. We have been able to capture a few photos to see that she is a young adult. You might be thinking, how can you tell? She still had a few dark feathers on her head at that time the photo was snapped. Periodically, we have spotted them bring sticks and adding them to the nest. The nest building activity is an essential part in pair (trio) bonding.

It is now December and they have been working diligently on the nest. Sticks are being brought in and arranged and then rearranged to the liking of the new female. We are looking forward to the beginning of the nesting season that should start taking place the end of January or February.

You can view the activities at the nest by connecting to the live camera feed at Stewardsumrr.org/webcams. If you are having difficulties connecting due to flash, please take a look at the Adobe Flash Help section on the webpage. We also have items for trio items for sale that can be found by visiting <https://teespring.com/stores/bald-eagle-trio-2018>.



Birding Guide



Birding Guide for the Savanna District of Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is completed and ready for you to pickup and explore our portion of the refuge. If you are a current steward member you can get your copy for free, otherwise they are \$10.00. This is a great tool to help you discover new areas that you haven't been before. If you would like an electronic version please let use know by sending an email and we can get it out to you.

Schedule of Events

- Saturday, January 6th “Clinton Bald Eagle Watch” 9:00am– 2:00pm see flyer
- Friday, January 19th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
 Christmas Party—bring a white elephant gift and dish to pass
- Friday, February 16th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
- Friday, March 16th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
- Saturday, April 14th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00am– 11:00am
- Friday, April 20th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
- Thursday, May 3rd “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
- Saturday, May 12th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00am– 11:00am
- Thursday, May 17th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
- Friday, May 18th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm

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



Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
 By Luke Jennings



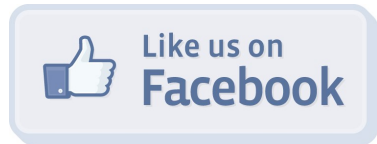
Jr. Stewards Photo Challenge
 By Madison McClelland



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



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.