

May 2013

Volume 1 Issue 4



# Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



## The Pelican Scoop

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### Welcome New Member

Steve Aram

### Renewing Members

Stan Bousson

Caryl Holleran



Prothonotary Warbler by Connie Zink . Photo taken May 5th 2013.

## Message From The President

It has been a long time coming, but I think Spring is finally here! Time to start thinking about getting out into the fresh air and viewing all of the natural wonders that surround us. Our eight passenger golf cart tours of the refuge is a wonderful way to get up close and personal with much of the wildlife in our area. Traveling in a silent, open air golf cart gives you a chance for excellent photo opportunities, and the ability to observe birds, mammals, wildflowers, butterflies and dragonflies at close range. Our first of the season golf cart tour is Thursday, May

2nd at 8:00 am thru 10:00 am. Tours will continue thru October on the first and third Thursdays and the third Saturday of each month. Also starting in May will be our regularly scheduled Lost Mound birding tours. These birding trips by van will be scheduled every second Saturday and third Sunday through the end of August. Tours will leave promptly at 1:00 pm from the Lost Mound Unit office and return at 5:00 pm. Please join us as we search the various habitats at Lost Mound Unit, in search of the Loggerhead Shrike, Blue Gros-



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL.

beak, Western Meadowlark, Lark Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Vesper Sparrow, and many others. Also, please don't forget our monthly morning bird walks, the second Saturday of each month from 8:00am until 11:00am. Hope to see you there!!!!

## Anne's Birding Corner

The Prothonotary Warbler or "Golden Swamp Warbler" is found in brushy areas along the edges of lowland forests, swamps, ponds and rivers. A bright golden bird with blue-gray wings with no wing bars makes it easy to identify. The name "Prothonotary" refers to clerks in the Roman Catholic Church, whose robes were bright yellow. Their diet consists of mostly insects, especially aquatic forms. Sometimes it will eat small crustaceans or snails. On wintering grounds,

nectar and fruits are an important part of their diet. This warbler is one of two warbler species that nest in cavities. (Lucy's Warbler is the other.) Moss is an important item in their nests. Most nests are less than 6 ft. but can be as high as 25 ft. or more off the ground. The clutch size is large for a warbler, sometimes laying up to eight eggs. The Prothonotary Warbler summers from the Gulf states to the Great Lakes area, and is very rare west or north of that. It win-



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL.

ters south to Mexico, Columbia and Venezuela. Mangrove trees are an important habitat during the winter in the south. The pair of Prothonotary Warblers that have nested along the bike path at Spring Lake the last several years, have returned and have been observed while on the golf cart tours.

## Backwater Birding With Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

Even though this spring's weather has been far from ideal for venturing outdoors, those who have braved the wind, rain, and even snow flurries have been rewarded with some exciting discoveries. There seems to be lots of egrets, pelicans, cormorants, and bald eagles occupying most all of our flooded marshes and backwater areas. Several of my more memorable sightings include a beautiful Eurasian Wigeon, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a single Willet, all in the same general area along a canal in the Green Island Wildlife Area. The first several weeks of May should offer birders some of the best viewing opportunities of the year

for sighting the maximum diversity and numbers of migrating birds. The late spring has delayed leaf and flower development in trees and shrubs, which should be perfect for the arrival of neo-tropical migrants, allowing them to forage longer and be easily observed until they continue their journey. May is "Warbler Month," when you can find over thirty species of warblers, including beautiful Blackburnian, Magnolia, Prothonotary, and Chestnut-sided Warblers in floodplain forests adjacent to wetlands. Vireos, flycatchers, orioles, tanagers, and swallows will also be present in peak numbers during this time.

Early May is also a great time to search the flooded Mississippi for terns, including Common, Forsters, Caspian, and Black Terns, along with Bonaparte's and Franklin's Gulls. Migrating waterfowl, including Northern Shovelers, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, and Coot will continue to add a lot of color and sound to our backwater wetlands. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or a beginning birder, now is the time of the year to grab your bird book and binoculars and head to your favorite wetland—it could prove to be your "Big Day" of the year.

**Do you have a birding question?? Ask Bob! Please email Bob at [info@sumriver.org](mailto:info@sumriver.org) and your question will be answered in future issues.**

**A group of whip-poor-wills are called a "seek" or "invisibility" of whip-poor-wills.**



## Jr. Stewards Chatter

We have had a great season so far for the Jr. Stewards program. This year, we are trying something a little different. A Jr. volunteered to be the reporter of the day for each outing. Allison Zimmerman is a 5th grader from Clinton, Iowa. She was the reporter for the outing that we took in April to the Exelon Fish Hatchery.

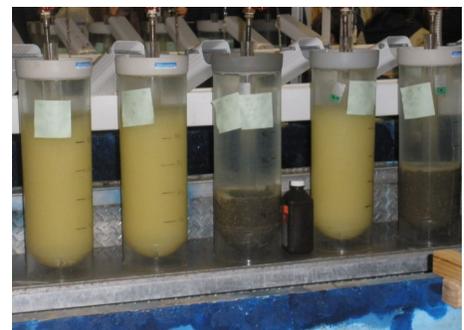
Allison's Report:

The Jr. Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and family members visited the Exelon Fish Hatchery on Saturday, April 13. The Hatchery is in Cordova, IL. When we got there the fish guy, Jeremiah Haas told us what they do at the Hatchery. We entered the meeting room there was a strong fishy smell. Next we went into the room where they hatch the fry. They estimated



Allison Zimmerman

12 million walleye eggs. The tour continued outside where he showed us the big fish. He also explained how they collect the eggs and sperm. We had a great time!



## Flash Point - The Beginning

My husband, Wade, and I love to go on nature walks. We would take hikes in the woods and walk along the river to get out of the house and into the outdoors. How many times has this happened to you? You are out on a nature walk, you have your camera with you and something spectacular happens. You stand there with your mouth hanging open watching nature unfurl in all her glory and you never raise your camera once to capture the moment. When we first got into photography, I had a tiny point and shoot camera and we spotted a Great Blue Heron standing close to the edge of the water. If we got close enough, I could get a pretty good picture. We very slowly walked toward it trying not to snap any twigs as we made our way through the trees toward the river where it was standing. The camera had very little zoom capabilities, so I knew I would have to get close to get the shot. All of the sudden we heard a rustling in the trees above our heads and saw a flash of color whoosh by. A Red Tailed Hawk had swooped in and tried to grab a squirrel that was not more than 10 feet away from us. We were frozen as the hawk attempted, two more times, to grab the squirrel. Fortunately, for the squirrel, it dodged those attempts successfully. The hawk landed in a tree not far from us to catch its breath before taking off, not to be seen again. As we stood there watching, the squirrel beat a hasty retreat from tree to tree, I turned to notice that the Great Blue Heron was now gone and so were the hawk and the squirrel. I didn't get pictures of ANY of them! We were so amazed watching the hawk, we both decided that we needed pictures of every bird we could find. If any "nature" would happen to get in the way while we were bird watching, we would shoot that as a bonus. So began our saga of nature photography; beginning with a Great Blue Heron, a Red Tailed Hawk and a Squirrel. It has been at least ten years since that day and we have gone through many cameras trying to find one that would capture what we were seeing. The DSLR is a perfect fit. The lenses are interchangeable and you can add as much zoom as you can afford. We now plan our vacations around where the best birding can be found at any given time of the year. Over the years, we have had so much wonder and joy at everything nature has to offer. The best part is that we enjoy it together. Until next time, get out of the house and into nature with someone you love!



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



## Stan Bousson "Photos of the Month"



Red Foxes by Stan Bousson

Song Sparrow by Stan Bousson



## Turtlemania Returns to Lost Mound by Ed Britton

The colder than normal April temperatures have kept the ornate box turtles in their warm underground burrows much later than normal. Last year, ornates began emerging on March 12, this year the first ornate wasn't recorded as being active until April 14. Most of the turtles were still underground the first week of May. Currently, there are 16 known turtles within the maximum security Turtle Corral and represent the only known ornates within the entire 4,500 acres of uplands at Lost Mound. Within the next few weeks, we'll be hastily changing out radio telemetry transmitters for another season of monitoring their daily activity. Last year's upgrade to the Corral has deterred coyote predation that have an appetite for turtle cuisine. The five foot high weld wire fence combined with steel sheathing buried 12 inches deep has been effective in keeping predators out. In 2011, we documented the first natural nest within the Corral and last year the number of nests increased to two. Nesting will soon be

underway and we will protect all nests found with wire protectors. Nests are located by radio tracking females at night. We believe there are other isolated remnant populations at Lost Mound consisting of a few individuals. In late May, the Tennessee Turtles return to once again to search for those elusive remnant populations. In early June, Turtle Daycare begins. The 14 Headstart juveniles that have been raised for 10 months at the Niabi Zoo and Lincoln Park Zoo will be released at Lost Mound. Seven individuals will be placed inside the Corral and seven will be placed outside to begin a new population. The hatchling turtles were raised at the zoos in order to achieve a larger body size that is less prone to predation. The Headstart turtles holiday paradise with catered meals at the zoo will abruptly end when released at the Lost Mound sand prairie and they have to find their next meal. The ever faithful Turtle Rangers have begun

their weekly radio tracking of individual turtles. Their task will be doubled with the addition of the new Headstart turtles. We are tremendously indebted to these dedicated turtle trackers, spearheaded by Beth Pomaro and Pam Johnson that provide important turtle movement information that is used in management decisions to conserve these relic reptiles.



Turtle Rangers Beth Pomaro and Pam Johnson

Headstart Turtles at Niabi Zoo



*“Sightings Around the Refuge”*



American Bittern by Connie Zink



Sora Rail by Wade and Connie Inskeep



Blandings Turtle by Wade and Connie Inskeep



Virginia Rail by Wade and Connie Inskeep

## “Migratory Bird Day” Saturday, May 11th 2013

### *Schedule for the Day*

## Life Cycles of Migratory Birds

CONSERVATION ACROSS THE AMERICAS

**7:30 a.m. Guided Bird Walk** – bring your binoculars and join avid birders on an early morning birding adventure. Participants are to meet at the visitor center and leave promptly at 7:30 with their leaders and will return by 9:30 a.m. Dress for the weather so you don't miss the fun!

**7:30 a.m. Golf Cart Tour of the Spring Lake Area**

Take an hour tour on Great River Trail that travels through the Refuge. Learn about the history, management techniques and even be able to identify various species of birds and plants. Space is limited to 7 (Rain or Shine).

Please register at 815-273-2732.

**10:00 a.m. Life Cycle Photo Documentary of the Sandhill Cranes**

- Stan Bousson—Refuge Photographer

**11:00 a.m. The Pelican Pod**

- Pam Steinhaus—Visitor Services Manager

Where did the American White Pelican come from? Did you know that the white pelican, like the bald eagle only lives in North America? The white pelican does not dive for its food but works as a team, “herding” up their food. Hope you can join us as we learn more about these large waterbirds.

**1:30—6:00 Birding at Lost Mound.**

Join us for an afternoon of birding in Lost Mound (formerly Savanna Army Depot). Participants are to meet at the Lost Mound Office parking area at 1:30 p.m. and will return around 6:00 p.m. There is no fee, but seating is limited. Please register by sending an email to [info@sumriver.org](mailto:info@sumriver.org) or call 815-273-2732.

### 2013 Stewards Memberships are now Due



Don't miss out on the fun of some of our member's only activities. Individual memberships are \$10.00 or family memberships are \$20.00. Please help support our many activities by mailing in your membership today. You may also support our webcam projects by sending in your donations by mail or donating on our website [www.sumriver.org](http://www.sumriver.org).

Thanks for all your support!!!

## Schedule of Events



Thursday, May 2nd "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Saturday, May 11th "Migratory Bird Day" 7:30am-12:00pm

Saturday, May 11th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:30pm -6:00pm \*

Thursday, May 16th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Friday, May 17th "Stewards" Monthly Meeting (Whitewater canyon trip being planned)

Saturday, May 18th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Saturday, May 18th "Duck Foot Marsh Birding Van Tour" 11:00am-3:30pm \*

Sunday, May 19th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00pm -5:00pm \*

Thursday, June 6th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Saturday, June 8th "Monthly Bird Walk" 8:00am-11:00am \*

Saturday, June 8th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00pm -5:00pm \*

Saturday, June 15th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Sunday, June 16th "Lost Mound Birding Van Tour" 1:00pm -5:00pm \*

Thursday, June 20th "Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge" 8:00am - 10:00am \*

Friday, June 21st Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00am - 1:30pm

**\* All events are free and open to the public but registration is required. Please call 815-273-2732 or email [info@sumriver.org](mailto:info@sumriver.org)**

**For additional events see our website [www.sumriver.org](http://www.sumriver.org)**



### Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge

7071 Riverview Rd  
Thomson, IL 61285

815-273-2732  
[info@sumriver.org](mailto:info@sumriver.org)



Like us on Facebook

Check out our Website:  
**SUMRIVER.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.sumriver.org](http://www.sumriver.org)



Make a difference and join today.

## Stewards Member Only

Please sign up today and travel with us to Whitewater Canyon Wildlife Area on May 17th. Bridging the lines between Dubuque, Jackson and Jones County, (Iowa), “this property is extremely unique. There is no development of any kind—and the combination of open land, woodlands and canyon on one property is rare. Whitewater Canyon’s beauty is unsurpassed.” -Bob Walton.

We will be leaving Ingersoll Center promptly at 8:30 am, please be here and ready to load at 8:15 am. Stewards members will be taking a guided wagon tour through the canyon. Be sure to bring your camera and binoculars in order to not miss out on the chance to view such a large diversity of wildlife. Bring your lunch, snacks, and beverage to take along on our two and a half hour excursion. We will return no later than 3:30 pm. For more information and to register for the trip please phone Pam at 815-273-2732 ext. 116 or email [info@sumriver.org](mailto:info@sumriver.org)



## Looking For Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help staff the visitor center this summer. We are looking for individuals that would like to donate a couple of hours a week to help answer questions, help run the bookstore and answer phone calls. We don't expect you to know everything, that is why we are having a training session on May 30th starting at 8:00 am - 3:30 pm. We will be spending part of the day inside and the remainder of the time out on the refuge so you can be familiar with various public use areas.

If you interested in helping out please contact Pam at 815-273-2732 ext 116 or send an email to [Pam\\_Steinhaus@fws.gov](mailto:Pam_Steinhaus@fws.gov).