



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



The Pelican Scoop

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Welcome New Member

Andrew Hagglund
Cindy Brown
Elizabeth Gosgrove

Renewing Members

Betty Hagglund



Common Nighthawk

Message From The President

It is hard to believe it is now the first of August, summer is flying by so quickly. One of the reasons that time passed by so swiftly for me, was directly after I finished the July newsletter, my husband and I left for two weeks vacation. One of the stops on our trip was six days at Yellowstone National Park. We were able to add twelve new birds to our lifelist, we also got to see several bears, a moose, and tons of elk and buffalo. In addition we visited the "Badlands", Grand Teton National Park and the National Elk

Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming (adding another refuge to my refuge list). The only problem was, we were not alone. I, Dennis, and one million other people were there. Last month, I told you about the tours at Lost Mound, well I can honestly say that several times, as we were sitting in the traffic jams waiting to get in the entrance gates, or just driving down the road, I wished I was on one of our tours to Lost Mound Unit. The reason why, no people, no lines, no traffic jams. Participating in one of the tours be it



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL

Lost Mound or the Spring Lake Golf Cart Tour, it really is a getaway with few people, just you and the wildlife. If you really want to get away from it all, please join us here-on one of our tours on the "Upper Miss".

Anne's Birding Corner

Common Nighthawks are a species of goatsucker. Historically, people believed that goatsuckers entered barns and suckled on goats. They are a medium-sized, dark brown/gray bird, that blends well with surroundings, when they roost on the ground or tree limbs. Nighthawks have long, pointed wings with white bars near the primaries. Males have white throats while the females have a buffy throat and lacks the white tail bars. They fly at dusk or dawn and sometimes during the day while hunting for food and displaying during the breeding season. During their diving displays, the male pro-

duces a humming/whooshing sound at the bottom of the dive and gives a rasping nasal peent. Females are mostly silent, sometimes giving a quiet, low chucking noise. They scoop flying insects into their large mouth which is surrounded by stiff rictal bristles, which are modified feathers that look like hairs. They feed on the wing, over treetops, clearings, and fields, as well as towns and cities. Common Nighthawks are fairly common but declining. They nest directly on the ground or gravel rooftops. Clutch size is 2 eggs. The young are precocial (dependent on their parents, but with eyes



Anne Straight - Forresteron, IL

partly to completely open, downy feathers, and are able to walk about shortly after hatching). They migrate in large flocks in North America through Mexico and Central America to their wintering grounds in southern South America. The (ABA) named the Common Nighthawk the 2013 Bird of the Year.

Backwater Birding With Bob



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

With the Mississippi River finally returning to normal summer levels and our daytime temperatures a bit more livable, now is the time to venture out to your favorite wetland area for some excellent birding. The leisurely fall bird migration has already started, and the recently exposed mud flats along the Mississippi River shorelines will offer excellent feeding opportunities for large numbers of shorebirds, which represent some of the earliest migrators. On a recent trip to the Green Island/Pleasant Creek area, we saw numerous Spotted Sandpipers, and a distant, large flock of small sandpipers that were probably Least Sandpipers. In the next several weeks, be on the lookout for Godwits, Pectoral Sandpipers, Dunlins, and Willets. Besides shorebirds, I noticed several late broods of American Coot and Pied-billed Grebes along Fish Lake Road in Green Island. The young coot were still displaying bright red faces and heads, and the young grebes

still had their striped, “zebra” colors. Several Common Moorhens were in the flooded roadside ditches, and over two hundred young Wood Ducks were in the canals adjacent to the still flooded timber. The tree nesting Wood Ducks seem to be the only species of waterfowl that have prospered with the high water levels that flooded out over 85% of the nests of the Canada Geese, Mallards, Sandhill Cranes and other marshland birds. On the home front, my “back yard” bird watching has also been excellent during these past few weeks. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Eastern Towhees, Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, and Black-capped Chickadees have been bringing their offspring to my sunflower feeders. There are female and young hummingbirds in such large numbers at our sugar water feeders that we are refilling on a daily basis. Surprisingly, the top bird attractor at this time of year has been the common Pagoda Dogwood

shrubs that thrive in our forest. The dogwoods grow 6-12 feet high and have a bumper crop of purple berries that are attracting an abundance of berry eating birds including American Robins, Gray Catbirds, and Cedar Waxwings. There are also Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Phoebes, Orioles, and large numbers of Red-eyed Vireos and American Redstarts. Most surprising were the Blue-winged Warblers and Hooded Warblers that feasted on the berries just outside our kitchen window. I encourage everyone to venture outside this month and witness some of the early migration and other transformations that are taking place in our natural communities. The temperatures are comfortable, the bugs have subsided and there are plenty of prime viewing opportunities before the colorful fall foliage is here again.

Do you have a birding question?? Ask Bob! Please email Bob at info@sumriver.org and your question will be answered in future issues.

A Monarch caterpillar will gain about 2,700 times it’s original weight. A caterpillar can eat an entire Milkweed leaf in less than 4 minutes.



Jr. Stewards Chatter

Jr. Stewards hopped on their bicycles and took a trip on the refuge. We stopped at the Spring Lake overlook and spent some time journaling and learning about some of the wetland plants that were growing. We also learned about purple loosestrife and how it takes over a wetland. We also road the crossdike and stopped at the pump house. We learned about water control structures and picked up a lot of garbage that was left by fishermen.



Flash Point - Sunrises

We got a new German Shepherd puppy and she requires a lot of exercise so I have been taking her out for walks before I go to work in the morning. The first morning we walked down by the river and I was fortunate enough to see the most spectacular sunrise. Normally, I am not out that early in the morning, so I had no idea that the sunrise could be so beautiful. The second day, the sky was clear again, so I thought I would take my camera with me. When we first got there, the sun wasn't above the horizon yet, but you could see some spectacular color appearing. A couple of geese flew by so I snapped a few shots and got a really nice scene.



As we walked on, I used my zoom to get closer to where the sun would peek above the clouds. It was losing a lot of the pinks and purples and gaining a lot of the orange and gold coloring that you will see in later shots. The wind was blowing pretty well, so the water was not smooth enough to show any reflections.



As we walked closer, the colors changed again to mostly yellow and gold as the oranges and reds began to disappear. The sun rays shining through the breaks in the clouds added yet more beauty to the shot.



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL

The sun just began to peek out from the clouds and you can start to see a starburst beginning. There are only about 10 or 15 minutes from the first picture to this one. Not much time, but a lot of change in the colors. It was glorious to watch!



This was the final shot as the sun made a perfect starburst on the dark cloud. I removed all the electric poles because they were a distraction that didn't need to be a part of the shot. I had this printed poster size at 20 inches by 30 inches and it looks spectacular! Nature isn't always birds, animals and plants. It can also be a glorious sunrise or sunset.



I took my camera with me every day that week and was lucky enough to see a beautiful sunrise every single morning. Each one was different in its own way but all were colorful and spectacular. If you are not a morning person, the same can be done for sunsets. You won't be disappointed, you just need to go out and see it. Until next time, enjoy your natural world and if you are so inclined, photograph it.

Snapshots from Lost Mound by Ed Britton

Headstarts Begin New Adventure:

Hatchling turtles that are raised in captivity for their first 9 months are called headstarts. They obtain the body size equivalent to a 6-7 year old wild turtle because they are fed regularly and do not hibernate in the winter. Once released into the wild, their larger body size decreases the potential for predation. The 2013 headstart cohort were raised at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago and were released at Lost Mound in June. Six were placed inside the Turtle Corral and 6 were placed outside which is the first release of headstarts outside the enclosure. We are comparing the movements and predation rate of those inside compared to those placed outside.



Those #&@! Snakes: Our celebration for a successful nesting season by ornates inside the maximum security Turtle Corral was short lived. Five nests were found in June-July compared to only 2 found last year. We were patting ourselves on the back for our past decision to upgrade the Turtle Corral (buried aluminum sheeting and a 5 foot high weld wire fence) that has successfully kept out our most frequent predator, the wiley coyote. We had also placed wire mesh cages over each nest for additional protection. However, the sand dwelling western hognose snake discovered the underground turtle cuisine and dined on every egg in every nest. Nest year, we plan to modify our wire mesh nest protectors to completely encase each nest.



Technology Makes Things Easier:

As part of our ornate box turtle headstart and nest protection programs, we capture adult females each year early in the nesting season and probe them to determine if they are carrying eggs. This method of finger probing is often inadequate and requires a turtle be caught several times. This year, Eric Sievers, a master's student from Missouri State University, used a portable ultrasound machine to identify developing eggs in females. We then radio track the night activity of the egg bearing females through our 24/7 monitoring by the Automatic Receiving Units attached to 30 foot tall radio towers to identify when the turtles actually nest.



Tennessee Turtledogs Sniff The Prairie:

The Turtledogs returned to Lost Mound in May to sniff out the elusive ornate box turtle. They are a professional turtle tracking service and have been specially trained to find box turtles. The search focused on finding scattered remnant colonies of ornates that survived the decades of military activities. These remnant colonies contain only a few turtles that are not considered to be a viable population, so they are placed within the Turtle Corral where we are re-establishing a viable population. The 5 day search found 4 ornates, all located within the Jo-Carroll Depot Local Redevelopment Authority's Industrial Park. Through consultation with the Illinois Endangered Species Office, we are approved to move any turtles found to be in harm's way throughout this former military installation (with landowner approval) and place them in the protected sand prairie environment of the Turtle Corral. The 4 ornates included 2 adult females, both in early stages of egg development; and eventually nested in the Turtle Corral.



“Sightings Around the Refuge”



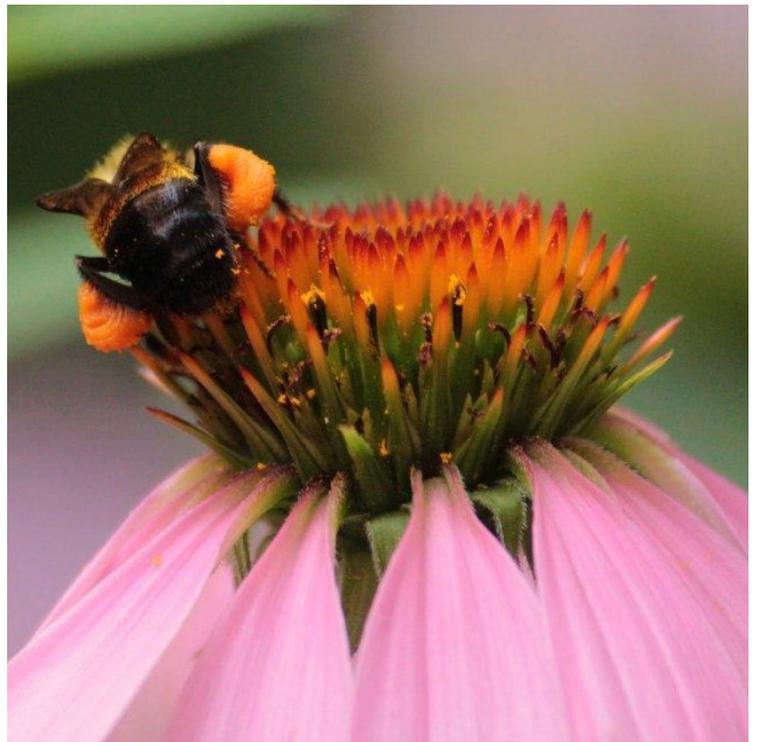
Chicory by Anne Straight



Henslow's Sparrow by Connie Zink



Prickly Pear by Anne Straight



Bee with Pollen by Debbie Cram

Stan Bousson "Photos of the Month"



American Coot



American Coot



Trumpeter Swans



Trumpeter Swans



River Otter



Hooded Merganser

Schedule of Events



Photo by Michael Fitzgerald



Photo by Michael Fitzgerald

Thursday, August 1st “Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge” 8:00am - 10:00am *

Saturday, August 10th “Monthly Bird Walk” 8:00am—11:00am

Saturday, August 10th “Lost Mound Birding Van-Tour” 1:00pm – 5:00pm *

Thursday, August 15th “Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge” 8:00am - 10:00am *

Friday, August 16th Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting 11:00am - 1:30pm

Saturday, August 17th 2nd Annual “Amazing Refuge Race” 8:00 am – 1:00 pm

Sunday, August 18th “Lost Mound Birding Van Tour” 1:00pm – 5:00pm *

Friday, Saturday August 23rd, 24th “Stewards Members Trip to Wisconsin”

Thursday, September 5th “Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge” 8:00am - 10:00am *

Saturday, September 7th “Kids Fishing Day” 9:00 am - Noon *

Saturday, September 14th “Monthly Bird Walk” 8:00am - 11:00am

Saturday, September 14th “Lost Mound Birding Van Tour” 1:00pm – 5:00pm *

Sunday, September 15th “Lost Mound Birding Van Tour” 1:00pm – 5:00pm *

Thursday, September 19th “Golf Cart Tour of the Refuge” 8:00am - 10:00am *

Friday, September 20th 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**

For additional events see our website www.sumriver.org



Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge

7071 Riverview Rd
Thomson, IL 61285

815-273-2732
info@sumriver.org



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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



Make a difference and
Join today.

2nd Annual



Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Ref-

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 be holding 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 1:00 pm.

Registration is required for the race! A team is comprised of a minimum of 2 people and a maximum of 6 people. **Bicycles are required for the mode of travel for this year’s event.**

Registration deadline is August 16th. Call 815-273-2732 ext. 116 or email pam_steinhaus@fws.gov to register or receive more information. There is no cost to enter and is open to all ages.

