Inside this issue:

Backwater Birding with Bob 2
Spring has Sprung 3
Jr. Stewards Chatter 4
Jr. Stewards Chatter Continues 5
Membership Dues 5
Trio Nest Cam Update 6
Schedule of Events and Membership Form 7

New Members
Cheryl Fedder
Margaret Howden
Alfred Lindenfelser
Allen Ransom

Renewed Members
Jane McCarthy
Richard & Kathleen Weber

Spring has Sprung
Welcome Spring or at least I hope so! I think we are finally on the threshold of the warmer days of spring. I must say, I am so anxious for spring gardening and the arrival of all of my warm weather, feathered friends back to my yard. I have missed all my usual spring and summer time buddies such as the Baltimore Orioles, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, House Wrens, Grey Catbirds, the brightly colored American Goldfinches, Song Sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings. Spring nesting season is about to start. The last couple mornings while sitting at the breakfast table, we have noticed five Wood Ducks landing in an old oak tree across the street from our house (three males and two females). They are hopefully checking it out as a possible nesting site for this season. Shortly after the Wood Ducks left, a pair of Sandhill Cranes flew over our house on the way to the wetlands on the other side of the railroad tracks. Our first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is back in the yard and the Pileated Woodpecker has been visiting a big half dead maple tree a lot lately in our back yard. You never know the wonders of nature that may be right out your own back door. I know I will miss some of our winter visitors that have now left. It was the first time we had a lovely little Red-breasted Nuthatch that stayed with us all winter, along with our usual Carolina Wren that loves our brush pile. With the changing of each season, old friends leave and new friends come to visit. I hope all of you have a chance to get outside and experience some of the great wildlife in your area and your own backyard. If you are in our area, the Spring migration is in full swing, please stop by and visit one of the many wildlife areas along the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. We can guarantee you a fun day, filled with nature! Until next time, have a great Spring!

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Jr. Stewards Chatter

As one of our most common warbler, it nests in open mixed forests and edges. It can be found in the west, and northern parts of our country, Canada to Alaska. It is known for catching insects in the air. It winters regularly in the southern states, Mexico and south in brushy habitats among fruity shrubs. Unlike other warblers, it can digest berries of poison oak and waxy shrubs like baneberry.

Anne Straight - Forreston, Ill.

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Anne’s Birding Corner—Yellow-rumped Warbler

Called the “butter butt” by birders, the gray Yellow-rumped Warbler has a bright yellow rump patch, yellow sides, yellow on crown, white crescent around eye, heavily streaked breast and white wing bars. In winter, it is a brownish color. The two subspecies are the “Myrtle” eastern species that has a white throat, white wing bars and the western species “Audubon” has a yellow throat and white edges on coverts.

Greater White-fronted Geese

By Stan Bousson

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Greater White-fronted Geese

By Stan Bousson
Spring migration came early this year to the frozen backwaters of the Mississippi River. Starting in early February at the Green Island W.M.A., thousands of Greater White-fronted Geese began funneling into the partially opened, spring-fed marshlands, and the adjoining cropland refuge area that had a bountiful overwintered supply of corn and soybeans. On February 13, Sandy and I observed the largest “V” of White Fronts ever for us. It spread from bluff to bluff across the entire width of the Mississippi River. That day we also saw 120 Trumpeter Swans and over 1,200 Pintail Ducks utilizing the food plots within the permanent refuge area of Green Island. By the end of February, we had logged over a dozen visits to Green Island and enjoyed 5 sunrises, 4 sunsets, and 3 mid-afternoon visits and saw many magnificent sights and the sounds of migrating White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese, Ross Geese, and the various races of Canada Geese.

In early March, large flocks of Tundra Swans joined company with the Trumpeter Swans, creating quite a chorus of sight and sound. Throughout the month, ducks including Canvasbacks, Redheads, Lesser Scaup, and Ring-necks were abundant above L&D 12 and 13. Puddle ducks also amassed within the backwaters of the Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. There are still good numbers of Teal, Wood Ducks, Gadwalls, Widgeon, Mallards and Shovelers remaining in Sloane Marsh, Spring Lake, Green Island.

Another highlight of the spring migration was the staging of a record of over 150 Sandhill Cranes at Green Island. It was interesting to observe the courtship behavior as large numbers were dancing. They also exhibited some rather aggressive behavior when a small group of young Sandhills sprinted 50 yards in the direction of a juvenile Bald Eagle and leaped into the air, attacking the eagle and chasing it from their feeding area. The eagle landed about 200 yards away, and a second group of Sandhills pursued it like the first group, and drove it completely off the feeding area.

Overall, this has certainly been a banner spring for birdwatchers—I have already logged 106 species for the year, with the best yet to come. The following is a list of coming attractions:

April 1-15—Early April is a great time to observe migrating sparrows in the marshes and floodplains. Look for White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, Harris Sparrows, Savanna Sparrows, and Song Sparrows. Shorebird migration will also be underway and dominated early by Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plovers, and Least Sandpipers.

April 15-30—Shorebird migration will continue and terns will also be migrating. Look for Spotted, Solitary, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Terns in our marshlands will include Caspian and Black Terns. Common, and Forester Terns will be below the Lock and Dams and in the main channel areas of the river.

May 1-30—The spring migration is generally completed by the middle of May. Many species of warblers, vireos, orioles, and other neotropical migrants may be observed during this time.

I encourage everyone to make at least a weekly trip to their favorite wetland and observe how quickly the birdlife and vegetation change as we progress into summer. Good luck and I hope to see you in the backwaters.
**Flash Point— “Spring has Sprung”**

Our winter, here in the Midwest, was very mild by most standards. Spring seemed to come very early with mild temperatures most of the month of February. Now with the spring migration, I thought it would be helpful to remind everyone of the rules of birding/nature etiquette.

We all like to get out and enjoy our local reserves and national parks but we must always be aware that we are encroaching on the homes of the birds, reptiles and other wildlife that live there. Tread lightly and respect boundaries.

When traveling in a group, always remember to walk quietly and speak softly. Many birds and animals know that you are there long before you see them. This also helps when you are trying to hear bird calls. When you do see a bird or animal, be courteous about allowing others to get a view. Once everyone has had a chance to see it, you can then have an extended view and take more photos.

Take care when entering an active nesting area. Birds will become stressed if they are disturbed. They may leave the nest exposing the eggs or young to predators. Do NOT use bird calls or apps during peak nesting season. Remember to stay a good distance away from active nests. It is always prudent to take a good zoom lens when photographing birds.

Make sure you are not trespassing on private property. Most private property near any refuge or park is marked and you should heed those signs. Getting permission beforehand is most appreciated and could be the difference between a good birding/nature experience and a bad one.

If you should see a rare bird or animal for your area, please be aware of the consequences of broadcasting it to the world. Evaluate how much disturbance could be subjected if everyone knew it was there. Rare findings should be divulged to conservation authorities.

There are many resources on the web for birding and nature etiquette. Google it if you would like to read more.

Until next time, here is a photo of a Hooded Merganser that Wade got over the weekend. It is time to get to the Refuge and see what is coming in!
2017 Jr. Stewards Season is Underway

Saturday, February 4th was our kickoff for the upcoming season with twenty youth, grades 4 - 8 in attendance. Schedule is set and we are ready to have fun and get connected to nature.

Lilly May, 7th grade Clinton, IA.

Photography

On Saturday, March 4th, the Junior Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge participated in a wildlife photography class. Even though it was cold that day, the group went outside to take pictures of birds using smartphones and tablets. After returning inside they were taught to use Snapseed and PIP Camera to edit photos. The group will be able to use these apps on pictures taken during future outings.
Jr. Stewards Chatter Continued

Luke Jennings, 6th grade Clinton, IA.

Raptors - Saturday, April 1st

It’s a bird! It’s a plane! No, it’s raptor! This month, the Jr. Stewards learned about raptors when Candy Ridlbauer of Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education came to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. We saw some amazing birds including Sky, the beautiful Red-tailed Hawk, and Sunshine, the tiny American Kestrel. But the crowd’s favorite part was seeing the Peregrine Falcon, who cawed until it got sprayed by water, and when it did, it fluffed its feathers like a chicken! All in all, the raptors helped the Jr. Stewards to respect nature a little more.

Membership Dues are Now Due

Thank you all so much for being a part of the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, whether you are an active member, or a supporting member, you make a difference. Each member may have their dues due at a different time. Take a look at the membership card that you received for your due date. Why are you a member of the Stewards? The reason we hear is, “we enjoy the comradery with those that have the same interests and care about our resources”. Many of our members are avid birders, photographers and nature lovers. There is something for everyone. 2016 has been a busy year. We completed several upgrades to our wildlife cams; assisted in providing many educational opportunities such as photography classes; assisted with the Jr. Stewards Program; provided birding van tours of Lost Mound; refuge golf cart tours; monthly bird walks; and many other outreach activities. Our monthly meetings are open to everyone and we encourage you to attend. We meet at the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center the 3rd Friday of each month, at 11:00 am for a potluck with a meeting to follow. Please fill out the membership card in the back and mail it with a check written to SUMRR.
“Trio Nest Cam Update—Pam Steinhaus”

Thousands of people all over the world are keyed into watching wildlife cams that are located in all corners of the world. Our Trio Nest Cam is no exception, either by word of mouth or social media, new people are getting connected and learning about this trio nest. Through most of the season so far it’s been a typical scene at the nest; adults bring in sticks and bedding material preparing for the new arrival of little ones.

In early February, Hope laid three eggs but only two hatched in early March. The trio cooperatively cared for the two young chicks. The typical scene changed on the evening of Friday, March 24, when two adult bald eagles attacked the nest. The webcam recorded the attack that lasted over an hour and shows two adult eagles battling on the ground in a desperate talon clinching struggle. When the struggle ended, both eagles walked out of sight of the webcam. Hope did not return to the nest that night and still was not present at the nest on the morning of March 25. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff intensively searched the area under the eagle nest and adjoining land areas. The nest is located on a narrow forested peninsula that is surrounded by Mississippi River backwaters. The searchers found no sign of Hope nor of feathers on the ground where the struggle occurred. Valor 1 and Valor 2 were disturbed by the searchers and remained off the nest during the search and for several hours after searchers left the area. Sunday evening, March 26, two adult bald eagles made a second recorded attack on the nest. Valor 1 and Valor 2 boldly defended the chicks and prevented the marauding eagles from entering the nest and no injuries were observed. In late afternoon on Tuesday, March 28, another attack on the nest was made by a lone adult bald eagle. Valor 1 and Valor 2 again boldly defended the nest and pursued the attacker in an aerial battle that chased the attacker off.

The aggressive siege on the nest is continuing. We can only speculate as to the reason for the attacks, but it is common for bald eagles to fight over nesting territories. There was another bald eagle nest located less than a mile north of the trio’s nest but that tree was toppled during high winds in early March. Possibly, the pair from this nest are the attackers with intent to take over the nest. We don’t know that for a fact.

We are hopeful that Hope only received minor injuries and is in hiding until she is strong enough to return to the nest. Extensive searches for Hope have been conducted without success. The most important task now is to insure that the nest area is not disturbed by people that would force Valor 1 and Valor 2 to leave the nest which would make the chicks vulnerable to an attack.

Meanwhile both of the Valors continue to protect and feed the eaglets despite daily attacks.
**Schedule of Events**

Friday, April 21st “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
Thursday, May 4th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Saturday, May 13th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00am – 11:00am (Meet at Sloane Marsh)
Thursday, May 18th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Friday, May 19th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
Thursday, June 1st “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Saturday, June 3 the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center opens 9:00am-4:00 pm
Saturday, June 10th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00am– 11:00am
Thursday, June 15th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Friday, June 16th “Monthly Stewards Potluck Meeting” 11:00am - 1:30pm
Saturday, June 17th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Thursday, July 6th “Golf Cart Tour” 8:00am - 10:00am
Saturday, July 8th “Monthly Bird Walk” 9:00am– 11:00am

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

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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

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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All members receive a 10% discount at the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center Book Store.

**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.

Like us on Facebook

Sandhill Crane— Connie Inskeep

Red-winged Blackbird — Tom Tarner