



## Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge



# The Pelican Scoop

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### Welcome New Members

Mary Monaghan  
Georgia Parks  
Larry and Bonnie Thoren  
Michael Fitzgerald and  
Cindy Cavanagh



American Woodcock

## Message From The President

Welcome to the first issue of "The Pelican Scoop". The intent of this newsletter is to connect you with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and keep you informed of all of the Steward's upcoming tours and events. Through contributors of this newsletter, we also hope to sharpen your birding and camera skills, delight you with photos from nature, and update you with all that is hap-

pening here at Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center and Lost Mound Unit. Nowadays, as hectic as all of our lives are, there has never been a better time to reflect on the wonders of nature that surrounds us. Before the last traces of winter slips away, now is an excellent opportunity to view our country's national symbol, the Bald Eagle. Please join us for one of our **free** Bald Eagle Viewing Tours, available thru March.



Connie Zink - Savanna, IL.

See our schedule of events for dates and times. Pre-registration is required as seating is limited. But for now, sit back, relax, and enjoy our first issue of "The Pelican Scoop".

## Anne's Birding Corner

The American Woodcock ("Timberdoodle" or "Sky Dancer") is a migratory, brown stocky 11" bird with a long bill. It is a nocturnal, secretive bird that blends in with the dead leaves of its habitat, the floor of the forest.

They arrive from the south as early as the end of February if the weather is mild, but more common, mid to late March. The males arrive first and establish their breeding territories. The two-part breeding territory is a location with woods and an open area nearby for his nocturnal displaying. When the female arrives, the

male will do his aerial display "sky dance" to attract her. These displays start around dusk and again at dawn. The male does a nasal "peent" and spirals up as much as 300 feet. His wings vibrate and make a trilling sound on ascent and makes a musical whirring sound on descend. He continues then to make his nasal "peents" late into the night.

The female lays 3-4 eggs and the young becomes active after their down dries. They soon start feeding by following their mother's example. They fly at 18 days, and range as far as half



Anne Straight - Forreston, IL.

a mile for food. In the autumn when the leaves are gone they fly south again.

The American Woodcock eat mainly invertebrates. Earthworms account for 50-90% of their diets.



Bob Walton - Zwingle, Ia,

## Backwater Birding With Bob

Now that winter is slowly starting to lose its icy grip on our landscape, it is time to venture to the Mississippi backwaters and enjoy quiet solitude and view the very early beginnings of the spring bird migration. As the days lengthen and the temperature gradually increase, small pockets of water will open, attracting a colorful variety of waterfowl and raptors.

Starting in early February and peaking around February 20th, large numbers of common goldeneyes and mergansers are attracted to scattered pockets of open water. Often times called “Winter Ducks,” they begin their northward migration as soon as open water becomes available, and are seldom seen during warmer times of the year.

Mid-February is also the time when migrating bald eagles congregate and slowly

begin their northward journey. Look for them below any Lock and Dam, or any backwater areas where winter killed fish are being exposed by the melting ice. This is also when our resident bald eagles lay claim to nesting territories and begin their nesting activities.

Near the end of February and during the first few weeks of March, other waterfowl begin migrating. Visiting large marsh complexes like Spring Lake and Green Island, birders will be rewarded by the sights and sounds of thousands of migrating geese. Dominated by several races or strains of Canada geese, including interior, Hutchins, and lesser, these migrating geese are often accompanied by much larger in size geese, our resident, giant Canada geese. Close observation of these large flocks of geese may also reveal some

mallard-sized geese known as cackling geese. These are now classified as a separate species. Other geese adding to the marsh chorus are white-fronted geese and snow geese, which both seem to be increasing along the Mississippi. There will also be large numbers of migrating tundra swans and a few resident trumpeter swans. During the first several weeks of March, migrating mallards and pintails will dominate the marshlands, offering a colorful harbinger of even more colorful species that will follow.

I urge everyone to venture out to your favorite wetlands early this year. Dress warm, arrive slightly before sunrise or sunset, and be prepared for the sights and sounds of the greatest show on Earth—the Mississippi River bird migration.

**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.**

**Did you know a group of American White Pelicans is called a “scoop” or “pod”?**



## Jr. Stewards Chatter

So what is the Jr. Stewards Program? This program is a partnership with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge. It is a year-long adventure for area youth (ages 9-14+) to create a lifelong connection with nature. Our goals for this program are to: awaken and stimulate a curiosity about nature; strengthen skills in observation, investigation and imagination and ultimately create a new generation of Stewards.

We have 16 youth signed up this year, with 8 returning from

2012. The 2013 season started off in February with “Tools that Biologists Use”. Jrs. were able to learn new techniques to journal better, improve their observation skills and tips and

tricks on photography. They will be using these skills all year as they work to complete the “Circles of Nature” challenge. A group photo will be in next month’s issue.



## *Flash Point - Making the Most of Your Photos*

We all love to take photographs and share the events of our lives. In this column, I will share with you our love of nature and how I get the most out of our pictures. My husband and I love to get out and take pictures of nature whether it is animals, landscapes or plants. Since it is wintertime here in the Midwest, the Bald Eagles are here in significant numbers. You can visit any Lock and Dam where the water is open and see Bald Eagles do what they do in the wintertime.

Along the Mississippi River, the Corp of Engineers makes it easy to view these magnificent birds by hosting viewing platforms and boardwalks at the Lock and Dams that get you close to the action. The photo above was taken by my husband, Wade using a Canon T3i DSLR camera equipped with a 400mm lens. As you can see, the bird was pretty far out in river, but this photo can be greatly enhanced by simply cropping the picture to bring the subject in closer.



Connie Inskeep - Moline, IL.



Here is the same picture that has been cropped using a photo editing program. See the difference? You can add a lot of drama to a photo just by bringing the subject closer. (I use Photoshop, but here are several programs that you can download for free from the internet that will do the same thing).

Here is a short list of free programs that will help you get the most out of your photographs: GIMP, Paint.net, Pixia, Photoplus and PhotoFiltre. These programs are specifically for Windows systems. If you have a Mac or Linux system, just google free photo editing programs and find one that will work with your system.

Until next time, get out there and take some great shots!

## Stan Bousson "Photos of the Month"



Stan Bousson

Bald Eagle Carrying Fish



Great Gray Owl

## Reflections from Lost Mound Unit

Special deer hunt for physically challenged: Since 2007, Lost Mound has conducted a special deer hunt for physically challenged hunters. This year's hunt was held November 10/11. Forty hunters and their assistants were treated to the hunt of a lifetime. Field surveys showed the deer population was high and the rutting season was in high gear. Twenty-three deer were harvested that included 16 does and 7 bucks. This high quality hunt has generated national attention. Hunters travelled from 10 states this year: Louisiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Iowa, Wisconsin, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Georgia and Illinois. Charlie Ande from Sun Prairie,



Wisconsin, killed the largest deer, an 8 point buck with a field dressed weight of 202 pounds. Charlie has multiple sclerosis and hunts from a wheelchair. His hunting partner was Colonel Joseph Tirone, the last installation commander of the Savanna Army Depot that closed in 2000. An intriguing part of the hunt was the

personal challenges of the hunters that included paraplegics, quadriplegics and amputees. One hunter, a quadriplegic, maneuvered his specially mounted gun on target by manipulating a controller box with his chin. When a deer is in the cross-hairs, he blows through a tube to engage an electronic trigger to fire the shotgun.



*“Rare and Unusual Sightings Around the Refuge”*



Mountain Bluebird at Lost Mound Unit



Long-eared Owl at Lost Mound Unit



Northern Shrike at Lost Mound Unit  
Photo by Tom Munson



Golden Eagle at Lost Mound Unit

*Please see our Schedule of Events for Upcoming Lost Mound Tours*

# Schedule of Events



Friday, February 15th Eagle Tour 8:00am-Noon \*  
 Friday, February 15th, Steward's Potluck Meeting  
 Noon- 2:00pm

Saturday, February 16th Lost Mound Unit Birding  
 Tour 8:00am – 1:00pm \*

Friday, February 22nd Eagle Tour 8:00am-Noon \*

Saturday, February 23rd Lost Mound Unit Birding  
 Tour 8:00am – 1:00pm \*

Friday, March 1st Eagle Tour 8:00am-Noon \*

Saturday March 9th Eagle Tour 8:00am-Noon \*

Friday, March 15th, Steward's Potluck Meeting  
 11:00- 1:00pm

Saturday, March 16th Lost Mound Unit Birding  
 Tour 1:00pm-5:00pm \*

Saturday, March 16th "American Woodcock Pro-  
 gram" and "Walk" at Lost Mound Unit 5:30pm-  
 8:00pm) Registration not required but recom-  
 mended

Saturday, April 6th "Curing Cabin Fever IV"  
 11:00am-2:00pm \*

Saturday, April 13th (No Monthly Bird Walk)

Friday, April 19th, Steward's Potluck Meeting 11:00  
 – 1:00pm

Saturday, April 20th Lost Mound Unit Birding  
 Tour 1:00pm-5:00pm \*

Saturday, April 20th "American Woodcock Pro-  
 gram" and "Walk" at Lost Mound Unit 5:30pm-  
 8:00pm Registration not required but  
 recommended

**\* 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](http://SUMRIVER.ORG)

## Membership Form

All members receive a 10% discount at the Inger-  
 soll 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.