DuPage Birding Club



Next Meeting

March 9, 2017 7:00 p.m. Social Time 7:30 p.m. Speaker

Faith Lutheran Church 41 N. Park Blvd. Glen Ellyn Basement

6:00 p.m. Pre-meeting dinner Panera Bread 541 Roosevelt Rd. Glen Ellyn

Upcoming Speakers

April

Doug Stotz, Field Museum, "What We Learned from Birding the Preserves"

May

Mary Hennen, Field Museum "The Peregrine Falcon Project"

Drummings March 2017

President's Message

As we march towards warmer weather, I can't help but think of the past several months, where we encountered cold, but not severe weather patterns. Then we had that great mid-February warm up that had everyone thinking spring and the return of many species of birds we've not seen in this area for quite some time.

This got me thinking about ebird and the rare bird alerts that many of us use to track sightings of many species of rare birds. I know many of you use this tool, but if you don't, you can find it on our website. Just click on my ebird and you will view rare bird sightings for the past seven days. Better yet, if you subscribe to the rare bird alert on ebird, you receive daily reports directly to your email address. I know there are many other tools in use. Maybe we will devote some time at one of our upcoming meetings to go over what is available.

Last year, well after the sighting, I posted a report of a sighting of two snowy owls, which I thought was a very unusual occurrence. Several weeks ago, a number of us that were on a hawk watch run, were thrilled to see three snowy owls plus a pair of peregrine falcons. What a great day that was! Last week, during the warm spell, I went back to the area to see if I could find any of the birds we encountered. I couldn't find them. I'm sure the owls are well on their way north, and we most likely will not see them again this year. As far as the falcons, who knows, maybe we'll see them again. I have my photos and am sure that I will be looking at them regularly and thinking about that special day of sightings. Many of us have special days like that, that's one of the joys of birding. So that brings me to our next meeting.

I recently viewed the lineup that John Baker our vice president put together for our March 9th members night meeting and can tell you we have some great programs for your viewing. Hopefully, you can make that meeting and be treated to many different bird species from many different countries.

See you at the meeting or in the field.

Stan Zatarski

President

Birth of a Hawkwatch

Hal Cohen

February 28, 2003. 5:30 p.m. I watched 36 Turkey Vultures circle above the eucalyptus trees directly across from my home. They settled in for the night and little did I know that this would be the beginning of hawkwatching in Borrego Springs, California. This desert community is in the middle of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The park, one of the largest state parks in the lower 48 states rivals national parks in size. At almost 700,000 acres it stretches for over 50 miles to the Mexican border.

The vultures settled in for the night with flapping wings, branches bending with their weight. I thought of my move to Borrego Springs a year ago, leaving the Midwest. It was there that I counted hawks seriously for many years. I said goodbye to Concordia University on Lake Michigan near Milwaukee where I counted hundreds of Merlins and Sharp-shinned Hawks in migration. No longer would I watch clouds of Broad-winged Hawks at Erie Metro near Detroit. Winter Bald Eagle watches on the Mississippi River were a memory. Whitefish Point, Illinois Beach and the Indiana Dunes would be too far from our desert home. My first hawkwatch, Mount Hoy near Chicago is where I honed in my skills in hawk counting. How I yearned of the hours of watching, digging in and looking at puffy clouds, hoping for hawks to stream by.

February 29, 2003, 8a.m. The vultures began to kettle above the eucalyptus trees and then streamed to the north. They veered west to avoid Toro Peak at 8,716 feet. I followed the vultures as they worked their way through Coyote Canyon.

For the next few weeks I concentrated my efforts on locating a site to watch the migration of Turkey Vultures. At this point I was satisfied working with Turkey Vultures. March 9th was a pivotal point in my exploration. I watched an unknown raptor at a great distance. It definitely was a buteo. I thought it was a local redtail and almost disregarded the sighting. Something about the hawk brought my scope out. It was a Swainson's Hawk! Later I realized that this bird was my first look at a migrating Swainson's Hawk through Borrego Valley.

I located the Turkey Vulture watch at the junction of Henderson Canyon and Borrego Springs Road. This location provided a view of the narrow exit point (Coyote Canyon) out of the valley. On March 11, I left the watch site at 9a.m. and headed home. As I turned south on DiGiorgio Road I spied a kettle of what I thought were ravens. I stopped my truck and swung my binocs up to reveal a kettle of 16 Swainson's Hawks. They flew northwest through Coyote Canyon. Immediately I scanned back to the area where the first kettle formed. Another kettle began to rise from the same area. I counted 17 Swainson's in the second kettle. They exited the valley following the same path as the first group. Unfortunately I counted only 10 more Swainson's during the next week. I left town March 18, returning March 25.

March 26, temperature 83 degrees, 10% cloud cover, wind ESE at 5mph, humidity 21%, visibility unlimited. At 8:11 a.m., 25 Swainson's Hawks kettled up and flew directly overhead toward Coyote Canyon. At 8:14 a.m., 8 more SW's followed the first group. Swainson's Hawks continued to stream overhead until 8:50a.m. The totals in less than an hour were 63 Swainson's Hawks and 2 Turkey Vultures.

March 27 was a confirming day for desert hawkwatching. At 7:47 a.m., I drove Borrego Springs Road to the watch site. As I approached the intersection of Big Horn and Borrego Springs Road I spotted hawks alongside the road and in Creosote Bushes. At 8 a.m. I was surrounded by Swainson's Hawks rising from the ground and bushes forming large kettles. Several hawks remained on the ground apparently feeding. By 8:20 a.m. 185 SW's had passed overhead. The final count for the morning was 220.

I walked into the field to find evidence of the feeding behavior I observed. The hawks were hopping about and lunging. The field was covered with spring wildflowers, mostly Sand Verbena and California Primrose. White-lined Sphinx Moth caterpillars were everywhere, feeding on the flowers. I collected scat from the hawks and later discovered caterpillar remains using a microscope. Continued observation confirmed that indeed the SW's were eating caterpillars before departing the valley.

On April 5, I decided to relocate the watch to DiGiorgio Road to intercept hawks in their feeding and roosting area. Many SW's were on the ground and in Tamarisk Trees. Kettles began to form at 8:00 a.m. Totals in three hours of observation included, 5 Turkey Vultures and 105 Swainson's Hawks. I was beginning to suspect that the majority of Swainson's Hawks were descending into the valley in the evening. To confirm this suspicion, I returned to DiGiorgio Road at 5:30 p.m. The sky was partly cloudy and it was very windy. At 5:40 p.m. I spotted 22 SW's flying close to the ground. They appeared to be searching for a roost site. As darkness approached, I drove slowly down DiGiorgio Road.

I noticed a huge kettle of hawks to the southeast. Stopping next to the road, I quickly focused on the largest kettle of hawks that I have ever encountered. I shouted "tornado! A tornado of hawks!" I shouted with no one nearby to hear. The hawks ranged from ground level to heights of at least 1,000 feet. A car pulled up and two young folks emerged. "What is that strange tornado like cloud over there." They had never seen a Swainson's Hawk before and now were witnessing several hundred. It was rapidly becoming dark as the birds began to descend. I counted in 10, then fifties as the birds streamed north. They began to split up. The majority of birds continued north and a splinter group flew west, directly over us. I followed the larger part of the group north as it began to descend into Coyote Canyon. By 6:30 p.m. I t was too dark to follow the birds. I estimated the number of Swainson's Hawks at 700-1,000 in the kettle.

April 6, we spent two hours searching for the roosting Swainson's Hawks. Only 210 were found. The remainder eluded us. We were definitely in the infant stages of understanding the roosting habits of the hawks in Borrego Valley. We were however now convinced that the hawks were using Borrego Valley as a strategic stop before continuing their migration north. The available food resource might have been the motivating factor that brought the hawks to the valley. No hawks were observed entering the valley this evening.

April 7, over 100 hawks were observed feeding on the ground this morning. We missed incoming hawks the prior evening. The total hawks counted was 185. I returned in the evening and spotted 21 hawks descending into the area. Another 30 were already on the ground or in trees.

Migration continued daily with totals for the period April 8-19 of 267. The grand total for the 2003 season included 2,031 Swainson's Hawks, 3010 Turkey Vultures, 1 Osprey, 2 Northern Harriers, 1Redtailed Hawk, 1 Ferruginous Hawk and 1 Golden Eagle.

We have continued our hawk count, now approaching the 12th year. Our ninth season (2011) saw a remarkable jump in Swainson's Hawk numbers. Spring 2011 was the ninth season of monitoring raptor migration through Borrego Valley in southern California. The record number of Swainson's Hawks (8,894) exceeded the previous high in 2008 (5,378) by over 65%. The count also included a record number of Turkey Vultures (1,422) The season was marked by lower than average rainfall and less wildflowers than previous years. A preferred food item of Swainson's Hawks, White-lined Sphinx Moth Caterpillars, was not present this season. However, a new source of food was abundant. Gray-bird Grasshoppers could be found in fallow fields throughout the valley. It is interesting to note that the number of Swainson's Hawks increased dramatically as did the grasshoppers. Aerial feeding occurred almost daily. Flying ants were in abundance early in the season. Additionally, on March 3, over 200 Swainson's Hawks hopped around a field consuming ants.

The Borrego Valley Hawkwatch is monitored daily from February 15-April 15. Each evening we also monitor incoming hawks and vultures as they come into the valley to roost for the evening. Watchers have an opportunity to receive alerts when several Swainson's Hawks enter the valley in the evening. To sign up for the alerts contact me (Hal Cohen at Raptorhal3@gmail.com). Several times during the season a blog provides information and photo's of the hawkwatch. The blog address is Borregohawkwatch.blogspot.com. During the 2015 season the blog will be updated weekly and daily when there is a significant number of hawks present.

The hawkwatch location includes the daytime count site on DiGiorgio Rd, 2.8 miles north from Palm Canyon Drive. The evening site is located on Borrego Valley Rd, 1.8 miles north of Palm Canyon Drive.

Fast Forward to 2017 as we anxiously await another season which begins February 21. The enormous amount of rain we have had in the past month has created another major flower season in the desert. Already (February 7) the mountains and desert are beginning to bloom. Desert lilies are scattered about the desert in astounding numbers. We will surely have a caterpillar season as well. And yes, the Swainson's Hawks will find the fertile feeding grounds that surround Borrego Springs. We expect the first of several thousand hawks to arrive any day now.

I now share with you a video, an article in the Huffington Post, and a TV special that illustrate the arrival of one of the nations great gatherings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOKMqg5Zbn8

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-nettleton/a-kettle-of-hawks-and-the_b_9545170.html

http://www.cbs8.com/clip/12287397/hawk-migration-phenomenon-in-borrego-springs



"The Bird That Devours Men"

By Joseph D. Kubal

Just up the Mississippi River from St. Louis, Missouri is the quaint town of Alton, Illinois. On the cliffs that from the town, the Piasa Bird (typically pronounced "pie-a-saw") resides in the form of a petrograph painted nearly 50 feet above the surrounding landscape's river plain. This "bird" is more fiction than fact but has an interesting myth behind it.

The legend of the Piasa Bird may or may not have its origins with the Native American Illini tribe. According to some ancient tales, there was creature that plagued the local villages and carried off tribesmen to later consume them. One day, a brave Illini chief named Ouatoga (OO-wa-toe-ga) presented himself as bait to lure the beast into a trap. As the monster grabbed Ouatoga, tribesmen ambushed the creature, shooting poisoned arrows at its unprotected belly under its wings. As its swansong, it let out a blood curdling scream and it plummeted into the mighty Mississippi.

Other folks say that the legend actually was created and popularized by the romantic frontier writer John Russell in 1836 who may have been inspired by Indian folklore. A description by Squire Russell stated that "it had a head of a bear, large, disproportioned teeth, the horns of an elk, the scaly body of a large fish, and a bear's legs ending with eagle's claws. The tail was at least fifty feet long, wound three times around the body, and tipped with a spearhead. The upper horns were painted red (symbolizing war and vengeance), the lower portion and head were painted black (symbolizing death and despair). The wings expanded to the right and left of its head, and the Piasa's body was at least sixteen feet long."

This description varies with that of the French explorers Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet who viewed and recorded in a diary a description of the Piasa petrograph in 1673 on their journeys along the river. As they headed southward along the "Great Father of Waters," (i.e., the Mississippi River), they were told by natives they met along the way, that to the south were monsters that would devour them if they proceeded. They continued their journey and came across a depiction of the Piasa (some referenced texts mention two such monsters) painted on the cliff near the confluence with the Illinois River. The diary recorded that it was "as large as a calf with horns of a deer, red eyes, a beard like a tiger's, a face like a man, the body covered with green, red, and black scales and a tail so long it passed around the body, over the head, and through the legs."

The original historical rock cliff painting(s) were destroyed in the mid-1800s through limestone quarrying. This local Alton landmark was repainted by local artists several times, first in 1924 and most recently restored in the 1999s as the 50 foot by 35 foot image continually fades through exposure to the elements and due to the crumbly limestone surface itself. As you can see from my recent photograph, it may need subsequent repainting



Marquette and Jolliet included no mention of the rock art as having wings and this painted depiction probably were the origins for the warning that they had received earlier upstream about the "bird that devours men." So, was it a "bird" or not and should we even be relating the story in this newsletter? I guess it is up to you, the reader, to determine what specifically is "bird-watching."

Note: The Alton Piasa bird can be seen one mile north of the town of Alton, Illinois on the Great River Road (Highway 100) along the flanks of the Mississippi River. There is a small park there with a car lot, restrooms, and several plaques relating many of the aforementioned tales.

References

Dunphy, J. J. (2004, May 4). Pisa Legend is Pure Fiction! Retrieved from Jon's Southern Illinois History Page: http://www.illinoishistory.com/piasabird.html

Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (2017). Piasa Bird: Mythical Creature. Retrieved from Britannica.com: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Piasa-bird

Indigenous Peoples' Literature - Legend of the Piasa Bird. (n.d.). Retrieved from Indians.org: http://www.indians.orgwelker/pisa.htm

Legendary Native American Figures: Piasa Bird (Piesa). (n.d.). Retrieved from Native-Languages.org: http://www.native-languages.org/piasa.htm

The Legend of the Piasa Bird. (n.d.). Retrieved from Piasabirds.com: http://www.piasabirds.com/piasalegend.html

Joan Norek

Joan Norek, a former DBC Field Trips Coordinator, passed away February 7th. in Chicago. Joan was a lifelong Chicago resident and birded Lincoln Park's North Pond on a daily basis with her dogs. She became a regular on DBC field trips, even after receiving a traffic ticket on her first trip with the club. She soon ventured further afield from her Chicago haunts eventually reaching far southern Illinois where she participated in Christmas Bird Counts and the Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois. She was an avid lister and compiled some impressive County lists in a short period of time. Her State List stands at 338 species after adding a Purple Sandpiper in December. She also broke the 300 mark twice for her State year list. She worked hard on improving her Birding skills and always had a tape of bird songs playing at home and at work. She also became a regular at the Greene Valley Hawkwatch where she would wait for someone to spot a bird, then try to find it. Most of the time we would hear her usual 'Got it!' but sometimes only a 'Drat'. Joan's IBET signature contained the first line of the following poem by Emily Dickinson.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -That perches in the soul -And sings the tune without the words -And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard - And sore must be the storm - That could abash the little Bird That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -And on the strangest Sea -Yet - never - in Extremity, It asked a crumb - of me.

March 2017 Field Trips

These early spring field trips target migrating waterfowl, raptors, passerines and shorebirds plus some returning breeders. We are offering a variety of field trips, including mid-week trips. There are opportunities for all types of birders to participate and enjoy the season. There is special support for new birders on some trips. We encourage everyone to enjoy birding in a safe manner. Please remember that the weather can still be very cold, and trails can be muddy, so dress accordingly, wearing proper warm clothing and appropriate footwear. This trip list and lots of other club information is on our DBC website at http://www.dupagebirding.org/.

Wednesday, March 1, 7:30 am Bemis Woods South, Western Springs

Join us at Bemis Woods South for a morning of birding. This will be a walk for new birders. We will walk slowly and allow time for all to look at the birds. We will check out the late-winter and early spring migrant birds. Meet at the old toboggan run. Entrance is off York Road between I 294 and Wolf Road. The trails can be muddy so wear appropriate shoes and warm clothing. If Lesa has to work that day, the walk may be over by 9:15, otherwise it may last a bit longer.

Leader: Lesa Hipes, 630-689-7463, lesahipes@gmail.com

Saturday, March 11, 7:00 am

Will County Tour - Advance registration is required.

We will meet and carpool from the "Park & Ride" parking lot on Old Chicago Drive, on the east side of Rte. 53 about 1/4 mile south of I-55 in Bolingbrook (behind the Ramada Inn). We will check the Channahon area and any hotspot that may arise. Tag along for a couple of hours or spend the day. Pack a lunch or dine at one of the fine eating establishments along the way. ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED WITH THE LEADER BY MARCH 9.

Leader: Jeff Smith, 331-481-3362, mrqmagoo13@gmail.com

Saturday, March 11, 8:30 am Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Cantigny started a birding program in 2008 and offers walks during most months. Please bear in mind that a group of 25 or more birders is common. Enter through the main gate on Winfield Road (just south of Roosevelt Rd.) and tell the attendant you are with the bird walk. Parking is free. Meet at the Visitors Center.

Leader: Jeff Reiter, <u>jreiter@wordsonbirds.com</u>

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS MARCH 12th.

Sunday, March 12, 7:30 am McKee Marsh, Warrenville

Join another morning walk to the marsh to check out early migrating birds. We hope to see migrant waterfowl. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Meet at the visitor parking lot on the north side of Mack Rd., located between Winfield Rd. and Rt. 59 in Warrenville. Most of our walk will be on Preserve limestone and earthen trails; wear appropriate shoes and warm clothing.

Leader: Kyle Wiktor, cell: 708-506-5186, kylewiktor@msn.com

Tuesday, March 14, 7:00 pm

Woodcocks, Greene Valley Forest Preserve

Greene Valley Forest Preserve is known for its Woodcock displays which begin shortly after sunset. Join us this spring on one of our walks. Walk will not be cancelled due to weather. **Meet at the west entrance parking lot, on the south side of 79th St. west of Greene Rd. in Naperville/Woodridge.

Contact & Leader: Jeff Smith, 331-481-3362, mrqmagoo13@gmail.com

Friday, March 24, 6:15 pm

Fermilab Species Spotlight: Snipe and Woodcock-Advance registration (3 days) is required.

The 'Fermilab Species Spotlight' features uncommon birds or those particularly unique to Fermilab. March highlights a pair of odd shorebirds, the Wilson's Snipe and American Woodcock. Because we will be entering non-public areas of the lab, a limited number of participants can be escorted, thus REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AT MINIMUM THREE DAYS AHEAD OF TIME. Upon registration, additional details will be disclosed.

Leader: Glenn Perricone, 630-687-2921, gp_arts39@yahoo.com

Saturday, March 25, 8:00 am

Shabbona Lake & Afton Preserve, DeKalb County

Waterfowl and early migrants are our targets for this trip. Take I-88 west. Exit at IL-56 (to US-30/IL-47) and drive about 23 miles west on US-30 to just before Shabbona. After crossing over the RR overpass, turn left at the BP gas station. After less than one mile, turn right on Forest Preserve Rd. (990N) and follow signs to the entrance for Shabbona Lake State Park. Meet at the concession stand by the lake. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes for the season. After our walk at Shabbona, please join us for breakfast in the area. Time permitting, we will visit the wetlands and ponds at Afton Preserve on the way home. This trip will extend past the noon hour.

Leaders: Bob and Jean Spitzer, 630-790-4842 (Cell on birding day: 630-222-3307), bobspitzer1@msn.com

Sunday, March 26, 8:00 am

Palos Area-McGinnis Slough: Waterfowl and More - Advance registration is required.

This location is an Audubon "Important Bird Area". Loons, grebes, and other waterfowl are targeted on this trip. Meet at McGinnis Slough, on the west side of LaGrange Rd. (US45), approximately 1/2 mile south of 131st St. *Contact Karen and Bob Fisher to register.*

Finding waterfowl is associated with open water conditions. Karen and Bob will monitor conditions and may change the starting location in order to see more birds; so, <u>ADVANCE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED IN CASE OF BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS!</u> This trip might extend past the noon hour. Wear appropriate clothing.

Leaders: Bob & Karen Fisher, 630-985-2956, Kfisher928@aol.com

Thursday, March 30, 7:00 pm

Woodcocks, Greene Valley Forest Preserve

Greene Valley Forest Preserve is known for its Woodcock displays which begin shortly after sunset. Join us this spring on one of our walks. Walk will not be cancelled due to weather. ** Meet at the west entrance parking lot, on the south side of 79th St. west of Greene Rd. in Naperville/Woodridge.**(You will have another chance to see Woodcocks on Wednesday, April 12, in case the weather doesn't cooperate on this date.)

Contact & Leader: Jeff Smith, 331-481-3362, mrqmagoo13@gmail.com

Friday, March 31, 2017, 4:30 pm

Know Your Neighborhood: West Chicago

The third of twelve 'Know Your Neighborhood' trips, exploring hidden gems, odd and under-birded hot spots in DuPage County, we will be checking Fabyan Parkway's ponds (Fabyan Marsh, Pella Pond, DuPage Tech Park) for migrating waterfowl. Meet at the Dunkin' Donuts at the intersection of Rt. 38 and Washington St. We will leave promptly at 4:30 pm. We should be back no later than 6:00 pm. Afterwards, for those interested, we will dine downtown. There will be limited walking, but dress for the weather. A spotting scope would be useful if you have one.

Leader: Glenn Perricone, 630-687-2921, gp_arts39@yahoo.com

Other Birding Opportunities

For additional birding opportunities check out the Illinois Birding Calendar at http://www.illinoisbirds.org/calendar/

Email us if you have questions about the trips or if you would like to lead a trip. Leaders do not have to be birding experts, just familiar with the location. There is no need to register for trips unless otherwise indicated. Visitors are always welcome. We do not charge fees for birding trips. Field trip information is also found at: www.dupagebirding.org

Field Trip Coordinators

Joan Campbell peachimc@gmail.com

Nancy Allured DBCFieldTrips@gmail.com

DuPage Birding Club

The club exists to provide fun and camaraderie between birders of all skill levels and ages while enjoying some serious birding experiences.

Member Benefits include:

- Meetings featuring regional and national speakers
- Field Trips throughout the year
- Informative Club Website
- Illinois Spring Bird Count
- Christmas Bird Count
- DuPage County Checklist
- Lending Library of bird-related videos & books
- Biennial Auction of birding items

Contact Us at dbcboard@gmail.com

President: Stan Zatarski

Vice President, Programs : John Baker

Send your articles and photos to chipnotes2013@gmail.com for inclusion in DRUMMINGS.

DuPage Birding Club P.O. Box 3381 Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

First Class



2017 Meetings

January 12

March 9

April 6

May 11

July 13

September 14

October 12

November 9

The photocopying of this newsletter is done through the generosity of the Birches Assisted Living Facility in Clarendon Hills. DuPage Birding Club sincerely appreciates the Birches' continued support.