



President's Message

Greetings of the season, fellow DBC members,

I hope this letter finds you full of cheer and enjoying the holiday season. This is my last letter as your President, and I want to thank you for the privilege of leading this great club for the last year. It has been a wholly enjoyable experience to reconnect with so many of you, to work on exciting projects like the auction, and to play a role in the club's present and future. I'm proud of the work the Executive Board achieved this year and would like to report back on how we did against the goals we set back in January. We had five goals:

- **Commit to being a high-performing Board that is accountable and gets stuff done.** Your Board met every month of the year and worked hard to line up great learning opportunities, introduce new programs, and build trust with the membership. We filled all open Board and Committee roles (except A-V coordinator—bah humbug!).
- **Serve our members' direct interests with an invigorating speaker program, new learning opportunities, and a range of field trips.** We kicked off the year with none other than Scott Weidensaul, a birding luminary and one of the most personable speakers on the planet. We also heard from Denis Kania on bird conservation efforts around the world, Stephanie Beilke on rails, Doug Stotz on migrants in their wintering habitats, and Vic Berardi on hawks. We introduced Mini-Tutorials on bird identification tips and deep dives into regional hotspots. And we averaged seven field trips a month to sites in DuPage and across northern Illinois. I think we totally nailed this one.
- **Put our cash to work to fund worthy bird-related projects.** The club generously donated \$5,000 this year! Our major grant was \$2,500 to Springbrook Prairie's restoration efforts, actually a delayed contribution from 2018's giving program. We also supported two IOS grants and donations to BCN, American

Next Meeting

Jan. 9, 2020
7:00 p.m. Social Time
7:30 p.m. Speaker

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

5:15 p.m. Pre-meeting dinner
Ellyn's Tap and Grill
940 Roosevelt Rd. Glen Ellyn

- Bird Conservancy, Wild Things, and Willowbrook. Your dues and our last very successful auction will ensure that we can maintain our generous giving program for the next couple of years (see the story inside on how you can voice your opinion for the 2020 donation year).
- **Find ways to engage members to promote participation, deliver value, and encourage volunteerism.** In 2019 we reintroduced the Birding and Breakfast field trip and the Volunteer Luncheon to encourage interaction. We acknowledged the efforts of five of our finest contributors with Distinguished Achievement Awards. And we focused on improving communications with our monthly Drumblings, a current website, and more social media activity. We have more to do here—stay tuned!
- **Preserve our reputation as a topnotch birding club.** We were an active and visible force in the Chicagoland birding community. We sponsored both the Gull Frolic and Wild Things, managed an active Outreach program averaging one event a month, and connected with the larger birding community through co-leadership of Cantigny Bird Walks, Spring and Christmas Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Count, and the Greene Valley HawkWatch. We're earning the good reputation we have every single day.

So there you have it. Thank you to the dozens of volunteers who played a role in this year's success and to all members for your continued support and enthusiasm. I'm leaving you in good hands, not to worry. Incoming President Denis Kania will no doubt be a thoughtful and dynamic leader, and the new Board is solidly behind him as we head into 2020.

So let's go have some fun and see some birds!

Cheers,

Diann

Voice your opinion for the 2020 donation year

The DuPage Birding Club would like your input regarding potential projects for our contributions in 2020. If you are an active member of record, you will receive an email invite to register your vote for one of the three candidates below. Please vote promptly! We need your vote by December 15 to meet timelines for two of the matching grant opportunities.

Because all three candidates are excellent recipients, the Board may choose to split proceeds among them depending on the preferences you voice. Here are the candidates under consideration, in alphabetical order:

Chicago Bird Collision Monitors

Chicago Bird Collision Monitors (CBCM) protects migratory birds through education, research and outreach. During migration periods, they monitor downtown Chicago daily for birds injured or killed in window collisions. More than 3,000 birds are taken to Willowbrook Wildlife Center each year. CBCM advocates for bird-friendly buildings and bird-safe lighting.

CBCM would use our donation in two ways. First, it would help cover costs associated with the unprecedented outreach they have through their hotline, which fields 10,000 calls each year from Chicago and surrounding areas, including DuPage but also out-of-state and even international calls. These contacts educate, help birds in duress, and encourage responsive interest. Second, CBCM would like to acquire bird-safety materials for windows to share with agencies and others that have contacted them asking for help with window strikes.

Fermilab Natural Areas

The Fermilab Natural Areas (FNA) organization was formed to study, restore and maintain Fermilab's unique combination of ecological environments, to inform and enrich local residents' knowledge of the Fermilab site, and to contribute to the preservation of global biodiversity. FNA operations rely on various sources of support, including grants and individual donations; they are completely separate from the lab and the DOE.

The FNA's big project is the restoration of the Eola Rd. grasslands, which supports habitat for nesting grassland birds, including meadowlark, dickcissel, bobolink, and sparrows. They have just received a grant from the Illinois DNR to continue this project but must raise matching funds to receive the monies. Helping FNA match the grant will essentially double our donation.

The Wetlands Initiative

The Wetlands Initiative is dedicated to restoring the wetland resources of the Midwest to improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and reduce flood damage. In Illinois, more than 90% of the wetlands present 200 years ago are now drained, tiled, dammed, or leveed. It is now understood the valuable role they play in removing pollutants, storing floodwaters, and providing food and shelter for wildlife.

Bob Fisher has offered a donation match up to \$25,000 in memory of his wife Karen for all new or increased donations to The Wetland Initiative's annual fund. While our contribution won't be dedicated to a particular project, it will support initiatives such as the Violet Meadow Restoration and Trail Project, which will start in 2020 at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge. This project will focus on restoring a range of high-quality habitats in the Refuge's northeastern corner, from rare seep and woodland to marsh for waterfowl and wildlife. The donation match is a great opportunity to essentially double our donation and help honor one of our past presidents. Deadline for contributions is December 31.

Register NOW for the Gull Frolic

Just a heads-up to all DBC members. The 2020 Gull Frolic will be held February 15 at Northpoint Marina. Registration is now open to this sell-out event. DuPage Birding Club is a co-sponsor of this annual opportunity to fine-tune your gull identification skills. The speaker this year is Justin Peter, who will talk about birds of the Galapagos Islands and what we've learned from recent research on their unique evolutionary environment.

http://www.illinoisbirds.org/19th-annual-gull-frolic/?fbclid=IwAR0GC0GuHy8i5LRiewKBxj8i4_IT50nEQvm4FP8p4qDscFokbPzfNWRWu1o

It's ba-a-a-ck! New Year's Day field trip at the Arb

The club is renewing a one-time tradition to kick off the New Year with a field trip at the Morton Arboretum. Join your fellow DBCers on Wednesday, January 1, at 8:00 a.m. and start the new year right. Meet at the east side Visitor Center parking lot (far north end, by the troll and smashed car) where we will divide into groups. For non-members, the entrance fee is \$15 per person, \$13 for seniors 65+. Many of our members are also Arboretum members and have free passes, so if you could use one or you have one, please contact Kathy Mineck at kmineck@yahoo.com

DuPage Forest Preserve's "Catching Nature" Blog

Several DBC members and former members have been featured in the Catching Nature blog on The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's website. Links to their stories are below.

<https://www.dupageforest.org/catching-nature/joe-sucheki>

<https://www.dupageforest.org/catching-nature/glenn-gabanski>

<https://www.dupageforest.org/catching-nature/greene-valley-hawkwatch>

<https://www.dupageforest.org/catching-nature/jeff-smith>

In Case You Missed It: November 14, 2019

Wintering Raptors of Illinois and Surrounding Areas

A New Board, A New Forest Preserve Master Plan

After celebrating October's record DBC auction numbers, the new slate of 2020 Board members were introduced and elected. Outgoing president, Diann Bilderback, thanked the 2019 Board as well as all club volunteers and members, appreciating the chance to again serve as DBC president.

Another exciting piece of news: the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) has a new draft master plan that includes funds for 11 natural areas restoration projects—good for birds! Although the comment period is now over, DBC members are encouraged to visit www.dupageforest.org to learn more and to take any further opportunities there may be for expressing their opinions.

Mini-Tutorial: Determining Species Abundance and Habitat Preferences of Breeding Birds in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois – Leah Bieniak

Next on the agenda were the breeding birds of Bloomington-Normal—a previously unstudied group. This research project by Illinois Wesleyan students Leah Bieniak and Rachel Schoenecker was one of the two Illinois Ornithological Society grants the DBC funded, so we were delighted that Leah could share the findings in person.

Working with their professor, Dr. Given Harper, Rachel and Leah set out to do the first complete survey of what species of birds are breeding in Bloomington-Normal, their habitat preferences, and what alternative habitat they use as preferred habitat becomes scarce. The long-term goal: to find ways to make urban areas of the twin towns more suitable for breeding birds.

Starting on June 1 of this year, Leah and Rachel set up a point count transect survey, covering the cities' roads, trails, parks, and golf courses, also noting tree species and amount of canopy cover in the survey area. By July 5, the 38 sites yielded 69 species and a total of 3,900 birds. No surprise, the most common species were the robin, starling, and Red-winged Blackbird, but the research recorded a number of [Species of Greatest Conservation Need \(SGCN\)](#): Chimney Swift, Bald Eagle, Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Flicker, Brown Thrasher, Dickcissel, and Bell's Vireo.

More data collection and analysis is set for 2020, but a number of interesting habitat-related findings were established. Ponds were a favored habitat, with more species and more total birds near ponds; lower tree-canopy areas also had more birds. All in all, Bloomington-Normal compared favorably in species diversity to nearby rural spots. The findings from this study can surely inform communities in DuPage as well.

With the data already collected, the duo has released a summary for the local park departments, and has impacted a development project, reducing the amount of valuable shrubs cleared for a disc golf project in Maxwell Park, home to four species not seen elsewhere in the survey area: Bell's Vireo, Field Sparrow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Blue Grosbeak. Leah thanked both the IOS and the DBC, and after thoroughly answering a number of questions, met with a second round of applause.

Wintering Raptors of Illinois and Surrounding Areas – Vic Berardi

Our main speaker, Vic Berardi, is the founder of the all-volunteer [Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch](#). He treated us to his personal insights and photos of the magnificent wintering raptor species in our broader region, from Appleton, WI up north, south to Paducah, KY, from the Mississippi River to western Indiana.

Owls excepted, we have 17 species of eagles, falcons, hawks, and vultures that live in our region from December to February. Readers will not be able to enjoy the breathtaking photos of these birds that he showed a small sample of, but Vic did share a few insights on each bird, and I'll share a few here.

First, a couple of our scavenging friends. The ***Turkey Vulture*** is much more common than 40 years ago, and a great place to see ***Black Vultures*** are in the southern part of IL, where they mingle with their Turkey Vulture cousins.

Sharp-shinned Hawks are not especially uncommon, but they are certainly not conspicuous, and likely undercounted and under-observed. ***Cooper's Hawks***, though, seem to be everywhere, and they are getting more common as they adapt to our urban environments.

Northern Harriers are a truly splendid sight, but hard to photograph well, and ***Northern Goshawks***, though much sought after, are not many in number, and also very secretive.

Red-shouldered Hawks show a lot of variation, and southern Illinois and Indiana are the best places to see them. ***Rough-legged Hawks*** also show lots of variation.

Red-tailed Hawks are the most noted for their variations. Our area gets four subspecies migrating through and often wintering: Krider's, Harlan's, Western (*calurus*), and Eastern (*borealis*). To add to the fun, variation is high even within these subspecies! Vic also introduced us to another possible subspecies, the Northern (*abieticola*) Red-tailed Hawk, subject of long debate that maybe only raptor lovers and taxonomists can truly appreciate. Thankfully, hawk watchers need only get into the thick of this debate if they so choose.

Bald Eagles can be seen anywhere in the region in winter these days, and now that we are seeing more of them, we can more easily learn their distinct stages of development—it takes four years for an individual to get its white head and tail! ***Golden Eagles***, though, are quite uncommon locally, but if you head to southwestern Wisconsin, you'll up your chances of seeing one considerably.

American Kestrels are tiny hunters that aren't too hard to find, but they are less seen at hawkwatches. ***Merlins*** are the opposite—seen at hawkwatches, but harder to find when out and about. Vic also convincingly points out that Merlins always look like they're up to some mischief.

Peregrine Falcons come in two groups in our region, the “original” *tundrius* subspecies, plus the hybrids so successfully introduced in Chicago and other cities. The latter are now breeding everywhere, so falcon watchers must now try to distinguish between the two.

A few species are simply not common at all in our local area. ***Prairie Falcons*** and ***Ferruginous Hawks*** are mostly west of us, while ***Gyrfalcons*** tend to stick to the northern reaches.

View findings of migration-season hawkwatches, including our own Greene Valley, at www.hawccount.org, and learn more about the birds they record from the Hawk Migration Association of North America (www.hmana.org), which counts Vic as one of its board members.

Where to look for our wintering raptors? Vic advises local forest preserves, open fields with trees nearby, borders of wildlife areas, open fields of industrial parks that never developed much, and large rivers with dams (for bald eagles).

His inside tip: circling the perimeters of our wild places will likely yield a lot of raptors. See how many you can add to your life or county list this winter!

—[Steve Constantelos](#), DBC Recording Secretary

December Field Trips

Saturday, December 7, 7:30 am

McKee Marsh, Warrenville

Join another morning walk at the marsh to check out resident winter birds, one of DuPage County's premier birding spots. 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 limestone and earthen trails; wear appropriate shoes and warm clothing.

Leader: Kyle Wiktor, 708-506-5186, kwiktor@dupagebirding.org

Two Christmas Bird Count Opportunities

Saturday, December 14, All Day Event

Christmas Bird Count, Fermilab Circle

The DuPage Birding Club sponsors this Christmas Bird Count. Thousands of birds and over 100 species have been logged in previous Bird Counts. This opportunity to join almost 100 other birders is open to all skill levels. If you did not count last year, please contact the compiler, Jeff Chapman for details or to volunteer and to be assigned to a location and area captain. There is no cost to participate in the count, but there is a charge to attend the post-count dinner.

Contact: Jeff Chapman, jchapman@dupagebirding.org

Sunday, December 15, All Day Event

Christmas Bird Count, Lisle-Arboretum Circle

Birders of all skill levels are welcome on the Lisle-Arboretum CBC. The Chicago Ornithological Society (www.chicagobirder.org) sponsors this count where sub-teams are assigned to various locations. Complete information is at the count website: <http://geoffwilliamson.info/lislecbc/>. Even if you cannot go out in the field, there is another way to contribute: DBC members who live in the count circle can participate as a "feederwatcher." For details and signup:

Contact: Carl Giometti, chicagiometti@gmail.com

Thursday, December 12 and Saturday, December 21, 4:10 pm

Springbrook Prairie, Naperville

Join Joe Suchecki at Springbrook Prairie in Naperville to look for Short-eared Owls. Short-eared Owls frequently winter at Springbrook Prairie and can be seen as they come out to hunt over the preserve at dusk. Meet at the Model Aircraft Field Parking Lot on Plainfield-Naperville Rd., south of 75th St. in Naperville. We will walk a short distance off-trail to wait for the owls to appear. Dress very warmly since we will be standing in one place as the sun goes down. Note that the owls are generally pretty far away and often appear just as the light is failing, so this trip does not offer a photo-op. The trip will last about 30-40 min. **Pre-registration is required.** Contact Joe if you plan on attending. The owls do not always winter at Springbrook and the trips will be cancelled if they are not around or in the event of inclement weather.

Leader: Joe Suchecki, jsuchecki@dupagebirding.org

Wednesday, January 1, 8:00 am

Morton Arboretum, Lisle

Come one, come all to Morton Arboretum to start the new year right! Meet at the east side Visitor Center parking lot (far north end, by the troll and smashed car) where we will divide into groups. For non-members, the entrance fee is \$15 per person, \$13 for seniors 65+. Many of our members are also Arboretum members and have free passes, so if you could use one or you have one, please contact Kathy Mineck at kmineck@yahoo.com

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

First Class



2020 Meetings

January 9

March 12

April 9

May 7

July 9

September 13

October 8

November 14