



Middlefork Audubon Society

a chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society

The Audubonite

February 2018

February Meeting is Members' Night

Thursday, February 22 @ 7:00 PM at the Danville Public Library

Come join us for some refreshments and conversation on a winter evening. No fuss. We seldom have time to get to know each other so we thought it might be nice to just gather and share our love of birds, talk about our favorite trails or natural areas, and maybe swap a few good animal stories. If you have something interesting to share, feel free to bring it along! We look forward to seeing everyone there. If you are not a member, please join us anyway, we welcome all!

Editor's Note: Newsletter Schedule

Beginning in March 2018 our newsletter will move to a bi-monthly schedule to help save on costs and bring everyone editions more rich with content. The first newsletter to follow the new schedule will be the March-April issue, our February issue will be the last of the monthly editions. Please check our website, middleforkaudubon.org for news in-between newsletters.

Life Lists - Do you have one?

Is it time to start your life list? I was inspired by 10-year-old Tyler, who joined us during the Forest Glen winter bird count this year. This young man is already working on his life list, keeping a record of all the bird species he is seeing in his lifetime! I'm over 60 years old now and have had a life list book on my shelf my Mom gave me years ago.... I think it's time to dust it off and start a list. Thanks for your inspiration, Tyler!

-Sue Smith

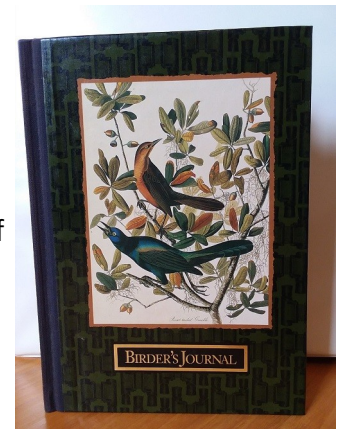


Photo: Sue Smith

"We have seen Geese and Goslings, Ravens, Blue Herons, Bluebirds, Thrushes, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Red-shafted ditto, Martins, an immense humber of Rough-winged Swallows about their holes, and Barn Swallows. We heard Killdeers last evening. Small Crested Flycatchers, Summer Yellow-birds, Maryland Yellow-throats, House Wrens are seen as we pass along our route: while the Spotted Sandpiper accompanies us all along the river. Sparrow Hawks, Turkey Buzzards, Arctic Towhee Buntings, Cat-birds, Mallards, Coots, Gadwalls, King-birds, yellow-breasted Chats, Red Thrushes, all noted as we pass. We have had a good day's run; it is now half-past ten."

From [Audubon and His Journals](#)

Snowy Owls

By Sue Tinkle

It was a cold, windy day January 30th when Bob Schifo called and said he had a predicament and needed some help. A friend of his had called him and said there appeared to be an injured Snowy Owl in a field near Henning. Bob had been there for almost 2 hours, trying to secure the uncooperative subject into a plastic garbage can with the plan of covering the top to calm the owl during transport to a rehab center. Tom and I dashed out the door with a large terrycloth towel and heavy gloves, prepared to do "battle" with a fearsome bird of prey on our mission of mercy. When we arrived, Bob was waiting for us in his car, and when we pulled up, the owl suddenly jumped from the ground and flew! Unfortunately, we do not have a photo of the astonished look on Bob's face or the relieved expression on ours, as we pointed to the owl flying down the road.

Investigating Snowy Owl behavior, I learned from Cornell Labs that Snowy Owls do a LOT of sitting. They sit still for hours in the same spot. They are actually hunting this way, using their extraordinary vision and hearing to locate their prey. If successful, a hapless rodent gets devoured head first in a single gulp. This is how Snowys hunt lemmings on the tundra, far north of the Arctic Circle during the 24 hours of daylight in the summer. They can eat more than 1600 lemmings in a single year. Unlike other owls, they are diurnal, meaning they hunt during the day. They are very agile as well, even able to catch small birds on the fly.

Some Snowy Owls remain on the breeding grounds year round while others migrate in winter to southern Canada and the northern half of the United States. They are regularly found in New York and New England but are "irruptive" in the Midwest, meaning they are not here every winter.

Male Snowy Owls are barred with dark brown when young and get whiter as they age. Females keep some dark markings throughout their lives. The whitest birds are always male, and the most heavily barred are always females, according to Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Keep a lookout for Snowy Owls while driving the country roads in our area. You just might be lucky enough to see one of these endearing winter visitors on the ground or on a post.



Photo: Bob Schifo

Boardwalk Birdwalk - New Date & Time

The monthly boardwalk birdwalks have been moved from 2:00 PM on the first Sunday of every month to 7:00 AM on the first Saturday of every month. The location at the Heron Park Boardwalk in Danville, IL remains the same. Please contact Bud Lewsader if you have any questions, his contact info is listed on page 3.

Phyllis' Feeder Story

At the Christmas potluck during member's slide night, Jim Smith and Phyllis Thomas both talked about building pole feeders from recycled materials. Phyllis brought in a photo of a feeder she built for her backyard that I thought worth sharing with our readers. I love it when people repurpose and recycle items they have laying around, and what better way to use some leftover scrap material than to build a bird feeder! Here is how she did it:

The post is built from a garden umbrella base she found at a garage sale. A piece of PVC pipe is tightened onto the base with a turn key on the pedestal. Over the PVC pipe Phyllis eventually added the aluminum duct work because the squirrels were able to get a running start and climb the PVC. She says the duct work diameter is too large for the squirrels to grab onto and climb up the pole now. She says "I won!"

The seed feeder base is a piece of heavy wood about 18x18 inches. To the bottom of the base she attached a pipe fitting with a flange she bought at the hardware store to which she screwed a 5-inch piece of threaded pipe. This pipe slides into the top of the PVC pipe pole. On top of the wood base is a pizza pan with a 1-inch rim and holes in the bottom to allow rain water to drain. The roof is a piece of scrap sheet metal bent slightly to cast off water. Four holes are drilled into the sheet metal and four 15-inch screws are used to hold it up. Washers and nuts are used to attach the rods to the roof and base.

The suet feeder is attached to one corner of the wooden base with a hook.

Phyllis says the feeder was originally put too close to the porch. The squirrels would climb her trellis and jump into the feeder. The beauty of this feeder is it is portable! She moved it further away from the house and, with the aluminum duct work, she has had no more trouble with squirrels. She is a winter bird feeder so at the end of the winter feeding season, she pulls the feeder off the pole and washes it out with a hose. Then she can tilt the base and roll it away until next winter.



Photo: Phyllis Thomas

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	<i>Calendar</i>	
Date & Time	Location	Event
Thursday, February 22 @ 7:00 PM	Danville Public Library	Members' Night
Saturday, March 3 @ 7:00 AM	Heron Park Boardwalk	Boardwalk Birdwalk



Thanks to Betty's Garden Center in Danville, IL for
hosting our annual Bird Seed Sale.

www.berrysgarden.com • (217)-446-3076