



# Middlefork Audubon Society

a chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society

## The Audubonite

January 2020

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### Greetings and Happy New Year to everyone from Middlefork Audubon!

With the holidays and winter bird counts behind us, we hope you are enjoying the mild weather by taking to the outdoors at your favorite park or neighborhood to enjoy the beauty of this season. Various hawks and bald eagles are soaring in the updrafts, eastern bluebirds are still singing their cheery call, and great horned owls can be heard hooting at twilight, midnight, and dawn! Soon the great horned owls will begin their nesting, one of our earliest nesters here in Illinois, laying 2-3 white eggs in a squirrel or hawk nest in a woodland near you, and go silent, so enjoy their hooting calls for now. If per chance you don't happen to find any birds on your trek outdoors, consider the extraordinary evening skies and bright, star lit nights here in East-Central Illinois. The crisp, clear winter air has afforded some spectacular sky views lately. Spring will be here before we know it!

Read on to learn about some count results, projects in the works, and interesting events we have lined up over the next couple of months to carry you through the long winter days.

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### January Program

***Birds: Here? There? Not Really Everywhere with Tara Beveroth***  
**Illinois Natural History Survey Avian Biologist**

**Thursday, January 23 @ 7:00 PM at the South Mad Goat Coffee House (just off I-74)**

Birds are declining all over the world, and the numbers at which they are declining is staggering. Come learn how scientists and citizen scientists alike are monitoring bird populations in North American and, more specifically, in Illinois. Understanding which species are facing the biggest threats, and what we can do to help them, is critical to the long-term health of many species.

We are pleased to have Tara Beveroth bring us up to speed on this issue of great concern. Originally from northwest Illinois, she attended Western Illinois University where she received her B.S. and M.S. She joined the Illinois Natural History Survey as an avian ecologist in 2004 where she has been involved in many projects including the Critical Trends Assessment Program. She also coordinates annual statewide Spring Bird Count (SBC) and Monitoring of Owls and Nightjars (MOON) programs. Tara is passionate about bird conservation and bird friendly habitat as well as many other conservation issues facing the world, which is why she enjoys engaging with all who will listen through public outreach.



*Mad Goat Coffee is a locally owned roastery and coffee shop, proudly serving the Danville area since 2014, located at 701 S Gilbert in Danville, IL.*

**Birds of Prey Program at DACC**  
**Wednesday, February 5 @ 9:00 AM and 12:30 PM at the Mary Miller Gym**

Once again, Middlefork Audubon will assist DACC in supporting the Birds of Prey program! Staff from the World Bird Sanctuary of St. Louis will be coming to display a variety of birds of prey during the annual Eagle Day at Danville Area Community College in Danville Wednesday Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. School groups and the general public are welcome to attend this free program. If you would like to support this program financially with Middlefork Audubon please contact MFA treasurer, Bob Schifo, at 217-260-2349 or [bschifo@yahoo.com](mailto:bschifo@yahoo.com).

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**February Program**  
**Travel log with Lee and Phil Solter - *Wild Tasmania***

**Thursday, February 27 @ 7:00 PM at the Danville Public Library**

Forty percent of Tasmania, an island province of Australia the size of Ireland, is National Park. We hiked 30 of the suggested trails in the National Park system during our 2-month visit, delighting in the unique landscape, marsupial animals and (very entertaining!) birds.

Lee Solter, our bluebird data compiler, (and recent retiree from the Illinois Natural History Survey as an entomologist) is now traveling the world with her husband, Phil. We are excited to hear their stories and pictures of this unique place on our planet. Hope you can join us! Refreshments served after the program.

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**SAVE THE DATE: Marilyn Campbell Memorial Project**  
**Saturday, May 30**

The Beech Grove Trail dedication in memory of Marilyn Campbell will be Saturday, May 30. The gathering will take place at the Forest Glen Preserve Beech Grove trail head in Westville, Illinois. We are looking forward to having you join us for this special day! Details will follow in the coming months.

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**Bluebird Volunteer Coordinator Needed**

Middlefork Audubon is looking for a volunteer coordinator for the bluebird nest box project this season. Approximately 390 boxes in Vermilion County are monitored from April through August/September by almost 40 volunteers. Lee Solter will continue to collect, collate, and submit our data, but a volunteer coordinator is needed who can communicate periodically with the volunteers and the Middlefork Audubon president, updating them with seasonal reminders and fielding questions. We are looking for someone with computer skills to send info via email and who enjoys bluebirds and people, as this task requires the ability to interact with all of our volunteers. Sound like something you might enjoy taking on?



Photo: Bob Schifo

If you are interested please contact Sue Smith at [suzanne56smith@gmail.com](mailto:suzanne56smith@gmail.com)

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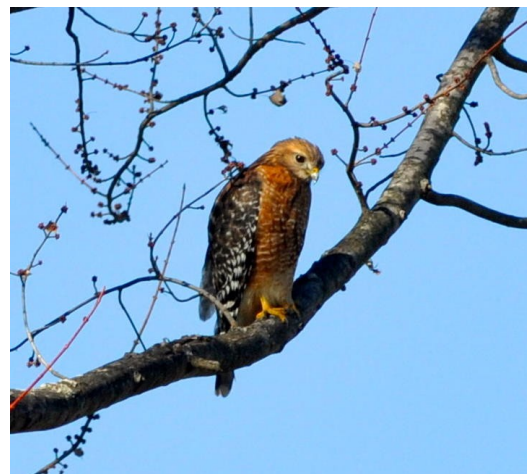
## 2019 Christmas Bird Counts

With the mild winter weather here so far, the recent Christmas bird counts held in both Champaign and Vermilion counties were again successful and enjoyable with a diverse representation of bird species found. Final numbers are still being tallied but 40+ cedar waxwings and 18 Eastern bluebirds were seen by our group at Homer Lake mid-December, and approximately 17 bald eagles were sighted during a clear, sunny New Year's Day at the Middle Fork count! We will share final count lists as they become available.

For the Middle Fork CBC, not all the numbers are in yet but here are a few high counts already without all data in:

So far we have 26 red-shouldered hawks and the previous high count was last year with 12.

We will also have the high count on Greater White Fronts, Bald Eagle, Eurasian Collard Dove, Lapland Longspur, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Possible high counts on Snow Geese (we are at 50 and previous high was 55), and Red-tailed Hawk (we are at 56 previous high was 60) are also likely.



Red-Shouldered Hawk on Middlefork CBC

Photo: Tyler Runner

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## Looking for a Winter Road Trip? Check out NABS 2020 Conference in Kearny, Nebraska March 11-15

Love bluebirds? Is seeing thousands of sandhill cranes on your bucket list? The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is holding their 2020 Conference in Kearny, Nebraska. Hosted by the Bluebirds Across Nebraska group, it looks to be a great conference with bluebird workshops, sandhill crane viewing blind trips, birding tours and more. The Platte River, near Kearny, is one of the major North American stop-over sites for thousands of sandhill (and a few whooping) cranes on their spring and fall migrations. This is a great opportunity to learn more about bluebirds and enjoy the spring crane migration with an avid bird-loving community!

See their website for details <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/event/nabs-conference/>

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## Board Members Needed for Middlefork Audubon

Would you be interested in an active role in planning programs, hikes, and goals for Middlefork Audubon? Our chapter is in need of 2 members-at-large who would be willing to participate in board meetings and bring their ideas and energy to this group.

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## Middlefork Audubon Society Board

**President:** Sue Smith • (217)-621-7528 • [suzanne56smith@gmail.com](mailto:suzanne56smith@gmail.com)

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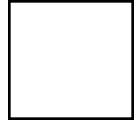
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Middlefork Audubon Society

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«First Name» «Last Name»

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«City», «State» «Zip Code»

	<b><i>Calendar</i></b>	
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March 11-15	Kearny, Nebraska	NABS 2020 Conference



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

[www.berrysgarden.com](http://www.berrysgarden.com) • (217)-446-3076