

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

August 2019



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

Exciting Visitor to Perkins Woods! *Woods!* By Josh Engel

John Bates, Libby Hill and I were leading our weekly May Thursday morning migration trip to Perkins Woods. It was pretty birdy and we had a large group, so we split into two. My group was standing in the middle of the tiny forest preserve, looking at various warblers, when Libby, sounding very excited, said "I've got a hawk! Or an owl!"

Once I got on it, I could hardly believe my eyes--it was a Mississippi Kite sitting in a huge oak tree! The bird sat for several minutes--long enough for me to call John and have his group join us; for me to run to my car, get my camera, and make it back to snap a few pictures; and for all 30 or so participants to see it. Eventually it flew off, and we didn't see it again (nor did others who came later to search for it), but the excitement certainly lingered!

It was the first time a Mississippi Kite, typically a bird of the southern US, had ever been seen in Evanston, and only about the 8th time anywhere in Cook County!



*Mississippi Kite, Perkins Woods,
May 2019 by Josh Engel*

And the ENSBC 100th Anniversary Continues **with a Live Bird Program in September!**

ENSBC, in cooperation with Evanston Public Library, will present a "Birds of Prey" program at 2 pm on Sunday, Sept. 8th at the Library's main branch, 1703 Orrington. A staff member from Cook County Forest Preserves' River Trail Nature Center will discuss raptors found in and around the Forest Preserves of Cook County and North Shore area. Don't miss this event, which includes a chance to see a live raptor, up close and personal. Great for all ages!

Spotted Sandpipers Nest at Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary

By Suzanne Checchia



Last year some high-value native beach grasses were identified in the dune area just southeast of the Clark Street beach house. Our hope was that as this area – referred to as the panne – developed, it might prove attractive to shore-birds. And so, we were delighted when a pair of Spotted Sandpipers showed up there this spring – and stayed!

Our bird monitors looked carefully for signs of nesting, to no avail. Throughout June there was standing water in areas of the panne from that month's heavy rainfall. Possibly the pair had a nest that had gotten washed out?

The birds persisted and were often seen walking along the top of the breakwater, foraging in the large fluddle on the beach, occasionally flying into and out of the panne. What were they up to if not nesting?

On several occasions during the season, I walked (slowly and carefully) through the panne vegetation when the adults were present on the beach. I found no evidence of a nest, nor did the adults pay me any mind (no agitation or distraction behavior).

In mid-July, eager to plan their workdays, the stewards asked me to answer once and for all, were the spotties nesting in the panne or not? When I arrived at the beach on July 17, I did not see or hear any sandpipers. I again walked through panne and still saw none.

With little hope, I decided to walk eastward along the breakwater toward the lake. About halfway along the barrier an adult spotty landed on the barrier to the west of me, vocalizing persistently (distraction behavior). As I continued walking eastward, ahead of me on the sand was a good-sized juvenile, looking pretty comical with lots of fluffy feathers hanging off its body. Another adult appeared, peeping loudly, and the juvenile disappeared into the vegetation. Mission accomplished. At least one spotted sandpiper fledged at Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary this year!

If that weren't enough good news, we can report that **12 new bird species** were added to our eBird list this spring. The new land bird species were **Blue-Winged, Golden-Winged and Orange-Crowned Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, Sedge Wren and Eastern Meadowlark**, seen either inside the Sanctuary proper or adjacent habitat. Josh Engel and his Spring Bird Count team added **Lesser Black-Backed, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls**; a couple of weeks later Josh photographed a beautiful **Franklin's Gull** on the beach. **Green Heron and Pectoral Sandpiper flyovers** were also new to the list.

We want to express our heartfelt appreciation to our CSBBS bird monitors, Mary Hotson, Sarah Miller, John Bates, Kate Julian and Mark Vaughan, most of whom have been out there recording birds every spring and fall since our project began. Thanks to them, and others who enter their sightings on eBird, our species list now stands at 169, from 431 checklists submitted.

I hope you will agree, this is a wonderful project ENSBC can be proud of. Let's all participate! I invite every club member to make one visit to the Sanctuary during the coming fall migration and enter your sightings on eBird. Help us document the value of this amazing resource to our migratory birds.

And special thanks to Suzanne for coordinating the monitoring effort!

Bird Calls is a publication of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club.
Please send ideas, comments, photos to Marj Lundy, catbird3@comcast.net.

*"Monarch in the Making"
at CSBBS
by Mark Vaughan*



Join Josh Engel in BRAZIL this fall:

October 2-12.

**The Pantanal and Cerrado,
co-sponsored by ENSBC.**

Birds and mammals (including Jaguar!) at the end of the dry season in one of the world's great wetlands, plus endemic birds of the Cerrado.

Extension to Iguassu Falls – and more great birds .
See <https://www.redhillbirding.com/tours> for details.

A Citizen Science Adventure in Texas

by Jim LaRochelle

During a week in February, my wife Carla and I joined an Earthwatch expedition to research Whooping Cranes and their wintering habitat in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, along the gulf coast of Texas. We were with a biology professor from Sam Houston State University, his graduate assistant and seven other volunteers from throughout the country.

Before going out in the field, we visited the International Crane Foundation's office in nearby Fulton, Texas to hear about their work in the area. Then we hopped aboard a birding tour boat for a 3-hour cruise into San Antonio Bay and along the inter-coastal waterway bordering Aransas.

Initially the field work involved observing adult pairs, or parents and single juveniles. Our protocol was to report and record six types of behaviors every 15 seconds for 20 continuous minutes: foraging; comfort/maintenance; locomotion; interaction; alert (response to threats); and rest.

Later we assessed the cranes' habitats, going into the salt marsh territorial areas (about 250-300 acres per pair) to search for wolf berries within randomly placed 1 meter transects, and then into brackish ponds looking for blue crabs. We did this from a small boat while the cranes were far enough away so we wouldn't pose a threat to them.

We also observed an adult pair and their juvenile, plus a group of sub-adults, in an urbanized area outside of Aransas to determine why the cranes are willing to inhabit an area with a lot of human traffic.

During our 2 weeks driving and taking part in Earthwatch, I added 18 new species to my life list. Not bad!



Whooping Crane in Aransas Texas

by Jim LaRochelle

Welcome New Members!



Saima Abbasi
Camille Blachowicz,
Patricia Brennan
Paula Cleave
Michel Hauser
Tim Later
Laurie Levin &
James Brickwedde
Linnea Mead
Sai Ramakrishna
Sharon Smaller

Wilmette, IL
Evanston, IL
Evanston, IL
Evanston, IL
Wilmette, IL
Chicago, IL
Golden Valley, MN
Evanston, IL
Glenview, IL
Evanston, IL



CSBBS from rooftop

Great Photos of
Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary
by Lloyd Davidson

Purple Coneflower



Spiderwort

Field Trips in September

Perkins Woods: Every Thursday
Northwestern Univ. Campus:
Saturdays, Sept. 14 and 21

Check details at

<http://www.ensbc.org/trips.html>

Upcoming ENSBC Programs

(see <http://www.ensbc.org/> for details)

September 24: Steve Mlodinow, "Stop and Smell the Butterflies." Steve Mlodinow has been birding since elementary school. After a long tenure practicing family medicine in the Seattle area, he continues his work as a doctor in Colorado, where he also spends time observing and photographing nature's ever-present surprises. Steve joined ENSBC in 1972 at age 10, and with the club's help, published *Chicago Area Birds* in 1984. He also coauthored *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds* and (with Bill Tweit, our October speaker) *Birds of Washington* as well as serving as an editor for *North American Birds* for over 20 years. His photos have appeared in numerous field guides, and have been used by The Nature Conservancy, Pronatura, National Audubon, the U.S. State Department and NASA, to promote conservation. Steve explores his journey from backyard birder to naturalist through vivid images and entertaining anecdotes, many of which involve members of the ENSBC, past and present.

October 22: Bill Tweit, "Citizen Science: a Personal History." Bill Tweit was first exposed to citizen Science through ENSBC as a preteen growing up in Wilmette, when he met Joel Greenberg, Bob Russell and Kim Eckert, who introduced him to birding on a bigger scale. After graduating from high school, he moved to the Pacific Northwest where pelagic birding and mountains have kept him enthralled ever since. He is now responsible for managing the salmon fisheries in the Columbia River and representing Washington on the Council that oversees the groundfish harvest in the rich waters off Alaska. Birding has remained a constant in his life, both as a relief valve and as a way to contribute to conservation. He is a regular contributor to a broad range of citizen science projects: Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, eBird, COASST (monitoring beached birds), Westport Seabirds (counting birds offshore since the 1970s), and he was one of three authors (including our September speaker, Steve Mlodinow) of *Birds of Washington*, published in 2005. Bill will compare three very different approaches to citizen science, providing an instructive overview of the benefits that it provides for conservation.

November 19: Bethany Barratt: "Birding in 'Wonderland' Yellowstone."

Stay tuned for details in the next issue of *Bird Calls* and on <http://www.ensbc.org/>.