

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

August 2024



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

Black-tailed Gull: a Great Lake County Sighting!

By Matt Tobin

I spotted the Black-tailed Gull Wednesday, May 29, on the north Waukegan Beach, mixed in with a flock of mostly Ring-billed Gulls and some terns. I originally had no plans to stop there that afternoon, but my schedule changed, and I decided to squeeze in a trip since I was in the general area. As I walked north along the beach, the gull immediately attracted my attention because of the darker mantle; my initial thought was Lesser Black-backed because of the yellow legs. However, when I looked more closely, the bill stood out as being different. I didn't see the gull in flight, so I missed seeing the black tail band. I thought it might be a hybrid, so I took a bunch of pictures of the side profile, and a couple with a Ring-billed Gull for size context and decided to investigate further.



by Matt Tobin

About 7 hours later, in a review of the photos, the red and black bill really stood out. I sought some late-night ID assistance and got ideas, steering me in the direction of Black-tailed. I couldn't imagine the bird was an East Asian gull native to Japan, Russia, South Korea, etc., but some eBird research revealed the species has randomly shown up in the United States and Canada, including two previous confirmed reports in IL, once in 2003 at Montrose and a second in 2016 in Clinton County. I decided to stay up and get the information out to others, so at about 2:00 AM, I put out a Lake County Rare Bird alert on Discord. It was changed to an IL Rare Bird Alert around 3:00 AM by a moderator (on the west coast at the time) who agreed with the identification.

The next day, a lot of birders, having seen the alert, were out at Waukegan Beach looking for the gull. It was found at 9:50 AM on the swimming beach, mixed in with other gulls. For the rest of the day, the gull stayed on the swimming beach, offering exceptional views, occasionally flying over Waukegan Harbor and Lake Michigan to forage for up to 15 minutes each trip. It was only about 60°F that day, so there were way fewer beachgoers than on a hot day, which helped birders get great looks as the gull continually came back. I went back twice that day but never got a picture of the bird in flight. However, I did see it both flying and on the water. The final birder left the beach after sunset.

On Friday, May 31, more birders went to Waukegan Beach very early, but the gull was only seen by about 5 "early birds" because it took off south at 5:45 AM and was not seen again there or at other sites along the lakefront.

On June 8, a Black-tailed Gull was spotted at Lakeview Park in Manistique, MI way up north on Lake Michigan; presumably the same bird, it was at that location until June 10. Based on eBird, I think that was a state first species for Michigan. To my knowledge, there have been no sightings of the gull in the US since 6/10, but you figure it's probably around somewhere.



Photo by Carolyn Lueck

Great news announced in the Sun Times on July 22: McCormick Place Lakeside Center Finally Gets a Makeover!

Following years of pressure from bird advocates, McCormick Place Lakeside Center is installing bird-safe film to deter migrating birds from hitting its windows. The \$1.2 million project began in early June and will take three months to complete, just in time for the beginning of fall migration. "McCormick Place's glass retrofitting and light reduction are a win for birds," said Annette Prince, director of Chicago Bird Collision Monitors. They set an example for other buildings and future projects, especially for large glass structures near green spaces and waterfronts.

Lake County Board passes policy on 'bird-friendly' glass in County buildings

Excerpted from a story by Sam Borcia

Because Lake County lies within the Mississippi Flyway and more than 30 million birds have crossed the region thus far this spring, the Lake County Board adopted a new policy that all newly constructed or add-ons to County government-owned facilities use at least 80 percent bird-friendly glass on their exteriors, from ground level to 100 feet high. The policy was voted on and officially adopted by the Board on June 11.

"We must find ways to reduce the numbers of birds killed in building collisions", said Paul Frank, Lake County Finance and Administrative Committee Chair. "Bird-friendly design is entirely affordable and achievable.... We hope that municipalities, other counties, businesses and residents will join us and adopt bird-friendly practices in the near future."

Put these Programs on your Calendars!

Sept. 24 and Oct. 22 will be our first experiments with a hybrid program. Join us in-person for the presentations at Robert Crown Center, 1801 Main Street., Evanston, Rm. B, or join in on Zoom. The Nov., Jan. and Feb. programs will be only on Zoom, and we'll be back again for hybrid programs in March and April.

September 24: John Bates, "Malawi." John returns with another of his captivating programs, this time taking us to Africa. He will present on the Field's decade long collaborations with colleagues from the National Museums of Malawi to study Malawian birds and learn what helps conservation there.

October 22: Vic Berardi, "Adventures with Raptors." Vic is the founder of the Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch, celebrating its 25th anniversary of full-time raptor migration monitoring. Well-respected for his photography, especially of raptors, he is also a co-founder of the Fort Sheridan Hawkwatch that began in 2013. Vic will share how he first got interested in nature, in photography and became captivated by raptor migration, with many photos and stories. This program is paired with two opportunities for Hawkwatch field trips.



Osprey by Lorra Rudman

Dear Members and Friends of The Evanston North Shore Bird Club,

I am honored and excited to serve as the new President of ENSBC. As I take on this role, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the trust placed in me by the board and our membership.

I join an organization with a rich history and remarkable achievements, all thanks to the dedication and hard work of our members. Together, we can build on our strengths and embrace new challenges.

My commitment during my tenure is to ensure that birders of all levels and backgrounds—whether you're a beginner or an experienced birder—continue to feel welcomed and valued in our community. With your support, I am confident we can make meaningful progress and have a positive impact.

I invite you to share your ideas, feedback and aspirations with me. Your input is crucial as we move forward together.

Thank you for your warm welcome and your ongoing commitment to ENSBC. I look forward to collaborating with each of you in the months ahead.

Warm regards,

Joe Flanagan

President, The Evanston North Shore Bird Club

jflanagan60@gmail.com

Evanston has just released Evanston's Interactive Birding Map. Here's the link.

[Welcome to the City of Evanston Guide to Bird Watching Map](#)

The map was created in cooperation with the Evanston Ecology Center, the City of Evanston Sustainability Department, and ENSBC. Josh Engel wrote the descriptions of the birding locations. It provides information about ten of Evanston's natural areas as well as information on conservation activities in Evanston. You can download and print the map or use it interactively online.

New Beach House Garden at Clark Street Beach

by Joan Linsenmeier and Libby Hill

What do you do with a neglected section of your yard that doesn't look as good as you'd like? It's not uncommon for homeowners to face this challenge. Ever since the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary was planted in 2015, volunteers have been working to enhance the main sections. However, we paid little attention to the area along the city path just north of the Clark Street Beach House—and it showed. This area, more visible to passersby than much of the area within our fences, had also been planted in 2015 but had become a messy embarrassment of overgrown and weedy young ash and hawthorn trees, Canada goldenrod, and our nemesis weed, the ever-persistent bouncing bet.

In summer 2023, volunteers decided to recover this space by planting a native perennial garden. The garden would showcase the beauty of native plants, increase biodiversity, support pollinators and other wildlife, and encourage homeowners to add native plants to their own gardens.

We were fortunate to find partners! The **Lincolnwood Garden Club of Evanston** worked with us to create the garden design. They recommended 12 species of plants for color, bloom time and size, and suggested grouping plants “in drifts” -- that is, planting those of the same species together instead of spreading out all the different species across the available space.

Over the winter, while we worked with the Garden Club to select plants, volunteers cleared the area of unwanted trees. When spring came, volunteers Al Gabor and Roger Hauge translated the garden design to a planting plan and ordered the new plants.

On our mid-May planting day, **Rotary Club** volunteers planted over 400 plants and spread leaf mulch around them in just 3 hours! Our new plants include wild geranium, wild petunia, butterfly weed, early sunflower, purple coneflower, showy goldenrod, Penn sedge, Joe-Pye weed and Switch grass. We added labels so that visitors can recognize the plants. A simple rope fence provides some protection without interfering with viewing.

Come by to watch our new Beach House Garden grow!



Beach House Garden by Libby Hill



Monarch on milkweed by Laura Rudman

A goldenrod by any other name: Readers may have noticed that we considered goldenrod “an embarrassment”—but one of our new additions is goldenrod. Why? According to information from the Chicago Botanic Garden (see chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/goldenrod), there are more than 100 species of goldenrod. Canada goldenrod, which we removed, tends to form dense colonies, spreading via rhizomes as well as seeds, and to crowd out other plants. Showy goldenrod, which we added, provides beautiful deep-yellow flowers in fall without taking over.

Field Trips Comin' Up

We have many field trips coming in the fall to observe the migration, from Waukegan Beach to Montrose Point:

Thursdays in Sept. – Perkins Woods with John Bates
Sept. 9 -- Montrose Bird Sanctuary with David Johnson
Sept. 10 – Waukegan Beach with Adam Sell
Sept. 11 – Emily Oaks Nature Center with John Bates
Sept. 18 – West Ridge Nature Park with Scott Judd
Sept. 21 and Oct. 12 at Northwestern

Sept. 23 — Fort Sheridan Hawk Watch with David Johnson
Oct. 19 — Illinois Beach State Park Hawk Watch with Vic Berardi

In addition, there are others at Canal Shores on Sundays and Jarvis Sanctuary On Friday mornings.

Check out <https://www.ensbc.org/calendar.html> for a listing of field trip descriptions with more details.



A Special Trip...to South Dakota! *by Libby Hill*

June is a great time for birding in southwestern South Dakota. From June 18-24, twelve ENSBC members and leaders Josh Engel and Matt Igelski toured three major types of habitats. We marveled at the colorful strange and striking formations of unevenly eroding sandstone, mudstone and limestone rock in the Badlands; the steeply rolling and steep-sided limestone canyons of the Black Hills, carpeted with tall ponderosa pines and spruce, where we stayed in Custer State Park; and the Great Plains grasslands, all within easy driving distance of Rapid City. In addition to the outstanding scenery, this Red-Hill Birding tour saw nesting birds and almost all of our target species, which was, after all, what we had come for.

The birds voted the top five favorites were, in first place, the Black-backed Woodpecker, which we found as we pulled up for our first look at the craggy granite of Mt. Rushmore. A small area had recently been burned adjacent to the parking area, creating the perfect opportunity to find this rare bird in view of the Presidents. Tied for first place was the sight of at least two Burrowing Owls flying and hovering out over the prairie dog habitat. In second place was a pair of Lazuli Buntings, a lifer for several of us, seen flying back and forth at a reservoir. Tied with the Buntings was the Chestnut-collared Longspur out in the Great Plains. Last but not far from least were the Upland Sandpipers, also in the Great Plains, perched on many of the posts by the road as if they were some ordinary bird.

Some species that didn't make it onto the favorites list but were enjoyed by all were the American Dippers, one sitting on a nest under a bridge; the Bullock's Orioles; colorful Western Tanagers;

Lewis's Woodpecker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, and Red-naped Sapsuckers; great views of Black-billed Magpies; Mountain Bluebirds perched atop nest boxes; and the Pinyon Jays seen at a feeder. In all, we tallied 143 species.

And of course, we were treated to many sightings of iconic mammals of the Great Plains. We enjoyed visiting prairie dog towns and watching bison herds grazing in meadows, and one lone bison making his way slowly past our car. We enjoyed pronghorn young playing, mule deer and a bighorn sheep close to the road.

Many of us were fascinated to learn about the various types of geology of this small part of western South Dakota and the history of the towns we visited. We even stopped at the Geographic Center of the United States outside the little town of Belle Fourche.

This is a great trip for anyone who loves natural history...and, of course, birds.



Everyone looking at a bird, not Mt. Rushmore! Photo by Matt Igelski

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Welcome to these new Members of the Flock!

Paul Barrosse and Victoria Zielinski	Evanston
Linda Bazarian	Chicago
Abby Dover	Evanston
Elizabeth Hopp-Peters & Kurt Peters	Evanston
Claudia Jakes	Evanston
Tom Jackson	Evanston
Amy Lenahan	Wilmette
Dorothy Nagelbach	Highland Park
Deborah Novar	Evanston
Janna Nugent	Evanston
Phil Timberlake	Evanston
Andrea Tolzmann	Chicago

Bird Calls is a publication of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club
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