

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

February 2023



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

Helping to Tame Winter for Your Birds Excerpt from *Wild Birds Unlimited, Glenview, Website*

A high fat diet...the medical books say, it's just not good for us. Well, it's a good thing that birds can't read! Because a diet high in fat is an absolute necessity for many of them to be able to survive the rigors of winter.

For birds, fat is fuel. It is the most concentrated energy source that a bird can consume, and it is the only dietary component that is absorbed completely intact by their body. Stored body fat is the primary energy supply that fuels a bird throughout the winter.

Keeping warm is costly. A bird expends about 60% of its energy generating body heat. To stay warm, songbirds may use up 75-80% of their fat reserves during a single winter's night. That's equivalent to shedding, and then replacing 10% of their weight in the form of body fat, every twenty-four hours.

Even in areas lacking bitter temperatures, the most overlooked winter survival challenge for birds is having to endure the long period of darkness during the night. While roosting, a small songbird needs to sustain itself for 13-15 hours, solely by using its fat reserves for fuel. For these birds, the daily challenge is to find enough food to not only make it through each day, but to also replace their fat reserves for the coming night -- all in the course of limited daylight hours.

So, this is where you come in.

Have you noticed how ravenously the birds eat at your bird feeders during the winter, especially first thing in the morning and just before dusk? Your birds are probably taking full advantage of the high-fat foods you are offering to quickly replenish their much-needed fat reserves.



High fat foods are a critical necessity that you can provide your birds to help them survive the challenges of winter. By providing a reliable source of these foods, such as all types of suet, you can truly make winter a little tamer for your backyard birds.

To learn more, go to

[Fatten Up Your Birds | Nature Centered from Wild Birds Unlimited \(podbean.com\)](https://www.wildbirds.org/podbean.com).

A SNAPSHOT OF FIELD TRIPS COMIN' UP

We are pleased to announce the return, after a covid hiatus, of two favorites, to introduce several new trips and to continue our popular destinations. Thanks to all the leaders who are sharing their time and passion for birds with us.

TWO FAVORITES ARE BACK!

Dave Johnson's popular Looney Trip to Lake County returns! Saturday – April 1. Loads of loons and lots of lakes. Record numbers of migrating loons are often seen on this trip as well as White Pelicans. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Diamond Lake Rd. in Diamond Lake across from Gale Street Inn parking lot. Limit 20 participants. RSVP to libbyhill@comcast.net and djohnsoda@comcast.net.

Mark Vaughan's Kankakee Sands trip is back! Sunday -- May 21. Near Morocco, Indiana, this 8,000-acre prairie and wetland restoration was originally part of the 500,000-acre Grand Marsh of the Kankakee River. Meet at Old Orchard parking lot at 6:30 a.m. to carpool on this all-day trip. Expect warblers and red-headed woodpeckers while enjoying a bountiful continental breakfast, courtesy of Mark. Register with libbyhill@comcast.net.

NEW TRIPS

Waukegan Beach, Friday -- May 5 (rain date Monday, May 8). In Lake County, the top location for early morning lakeshore birding *must be* Waukegan Beach. Search for migrant shorebirds and waterbirds along the beach before heading to the adjacent woods and park. After Waukegan, on to Illinois Beach State Park for migrants, Virginia Rail and Sora, Sandhill Crane and, if lucky, a Whip-poor-will. Limit 10 participants. Register with libbyhill@comcast.net. Leader: Adam Sell.



*Merlin at Ryerson Woods by
Matt Tobin, January 2023*

Harbert Payne Park, Evanston – Wednesday, May 24. Look for late spring warblers and other migrants in one of Evanston's newest ecologically managed sites along the North Shore Channel. Meet at parking lot at the intersection of Bradley Place and McDaniel Avenue at 7:30 a.m. Enter from Main Street. Leader: Judy Pollock.

Emily Oaks Nature Center, Friday – May 26. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Nature Center parking lot, 4650 Brummel Street, Skokie. Leader: John Bates.

Check <https://www.ensbc.org> for popular trips that will again be held this spring, starting March 19 with Woodcocks at Air Station Prairie.

YOU can help Influence Bird-safety Measures at Northwestern!

Every year, over 700 migrating birds are killed or injured flying into buildings -- especially Mudd Library -- at Northwestern University. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, members of the Evanston community and beyond, are urged to [sign the petition](#) to lobby Northwestern to prioritize bird-safe buildings in its budget. ENSBC has signed as an organization, but individual signatures are needed as well. Let's each do our part!

Bird Calls is a publication of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club
P.O. Box 1313, Evanston, IL 60204, info@ensbc.org.
Send ideas, articles, photos to Marj Lundy, Editor, at catbird3@comcast.net.



ENSBC Christmas Bird Count : Record Numbers of Several Species !

Evanston North Shore Bird Club sponsored its 62nd annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Monday, December 26, 2022. The CBC is the premier community science project, running now for 123 years. We send our data to a central repository at the National Audubon Society, and one can easily view historical trends at their website (<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/where-have-all-birds-gone>).

Our 62 dedicated field birders in 10 sub-areas enjoyed lighter winds following a once-in-a generation bomb cyclone pressure drop with subzero temperatures the week before. We found 69 species in our 15-mile diameter count circle. The total number of species was only slightly below our average of 71 since 2000, mostly due to the absence of many duck species normally seen. However, we found two new species for this count, and while it was not “The Day of the Condor”, we had record numbers of 3 species of raptors! We collectively walked a total of 121 miles and drove another 189 to observe birds in daylight hours.



Red-tailed Hawk by Lorra Rudman

In addition, several participants set out before dawn or after dusk to find owls, both Eastern Screech (23) and Great Horned (15) Owls. Owen Woodhouse also found 2 Screech Owls roosting in a tree in broad daylight, an uncommon treat. After allowing two days for the coordinators to pull their numbers together, John Leonard virtually presented the spreadsheet on Zoom for the excitement-building countdown, starting with, of course, European Starling, and ending with rarities. Putting observations of each species in historical context, along with trend graphs of prior data, interests all participants; especially appealing is the later stage of the countdown when less

common and even surprising finds are revealed.

Jeff Bilsky had previously found a Marsh Wren in the Memorial Cemetery in Skokie, and it stayed around to become a first ever for this count that began in 1962! While last year’s count was dominated by huge numbers of redpolls, loons and ducks, these were absent this time. On the other hand, we saw no Rough-legged Hawks last year but set a record with 25 this year. Bald Eagles continue their recovery and the weather pushed nearly double the number from last year’s 12 into our area (22 this year). The largest record breaker among all birds this year was the influx of Northern Harriers, formerly known as Marsh Hawks, that were absent last year. We saw 15 hunting low over widespread regions of our areas while the prior record high number was 6. The Fort Sheridan counters found 2 Meadowlarks and close examination of photographs by Ari Rice revealed that one of them was the Western Meadowlark found by Jeff Bilsky at the same spot the next day!

Record numbers of Hairy Woodpeckers were found, maybe in part due to an abundance of dead and dying ash trees. Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to do well especially at Ryerson Conservation Area, and we found 4 Pileated Woodpeckers, 2 at Ryerson, and 2 by Al Stokie at River Trails Nature Center (prior high

was 2 in total). Ice-up caused water birds to be concentrated at small areas of open water, possibly contributing to the record numbers of Belted Kingfishers (14) and Great Blue Herons (22) found. While no birds were uniquely found at feeders, 22 species were tallied, and their numbers significantly boosted our count of Mourning Doves, woodpeckers, and several other backyard birds. Thanks to Tim Joyce of Wild Birds Unlimited, Glenview for spreading the word about our feeder effort and Joel Greenberg for collecting the data. In all, we counted 13,573 birds! Hopefully we will be able to hold a normal countdown tally dinner next year and recruit more participants both in the field and at feeders.

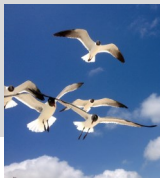
by John Leonard



Western Meadowlark

New Members: Welcome to the Flock!

Cheryl Cohen	Chicago
Marlo Del Percio	Evanston
Robert J. Faulkner	Niles
Janice Bell Kaye	Evanston
Anita Lutkus	Wilmette
Dorothe Magid	Evanston
Barbara Otto	Evanston
Sigrid Schmidt	Evanston
Bridget Stump	Evanston



The ENSBC Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for the 2023-24 Board. Membership on the Board is a good way to become more involved in ENSBC, especially if you are new to the Club. Members of the Committee are Sarah Miller, Chair, Leslie Shad and Libby Hill. Please contact Sarah at sarahandsheldon@comcast.net if you are interested or have someone to suggest. The election will be held at the Tuesday, April 25th ENSBC meeting.

A Very Special Birding Opportunity!

ENSBC is again teaming up with Red Hill Birding for an out of state field trip, this time to South Dakota! Join us in June 2024 as we spend a week birding our way around the Badlands, the Black Hills, and the Great Plains (and Mount Rushmore!). We hope to see many western birds and animals in these beautiful landscapes, including American Dipper, Lark Bunting, Burrowing Owl, Pinyon Jay, American Bison, and Bighorn Sheep. And we will get to experience the wonderful slice of Americana that is Western South Dakota in summertime. The trip will be led by Josh Engel and Steve Huggins, with a maximum of 12 participants. Please find the itinerary and other details at [this link](#); please email Libby Hill (libbyhill@comcast.net) with questions or to express interest in joining.

Programs you won't Want to Miss!

(on Zoom, Tuesdays at 7:30 pm—open for Social hour at 7:00 pm)

February 28: Falkland Islands to the Antarctic by Sailboat. John Bates, Field Museum Curator of Birds, will present on a January 2022 expedition by sailboat from the Falkland Islands to the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia Island, and back. The trip was led by five female researchers to gather scientific samples and data on multiple penguin species, particularly Gentoos. Come learn about these captivating birds from Adeles and Chinstraps on the Antarctic Peninsula to Kings and Macronis on South Georgia, to Southern Rockhoppers and Magellanics on the Falklands.

March 28: All About Swifts! Have you ever watched hundreds of swifts dropping down into chimneys as they gather for the night during Fall Migration? Here is your chance to learn more. Considered by many the most mysterious birds on our planet, swifts are currently one of the most threatened avian groups. In her presentation, Renata Biancalana, ornithologist from Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, will talk about her field work and expeditions studying swift species in different parts of Brazil, including the Amazon, and the results of her research.

April 25: Waukegan Beach: Local Birding Hotspot: A favorite ENSBC birding spot for decades, birders know Waukegan Beach as a migration hotspot in both fall and spring for warblers, shorebirds, and waterfowl. In winter, the harbors and open water of Lake Michigan host overwintering specialty ducks, gulls, and if you're lucky, a Snowy Owl. Vagrant highlights at Waukegan Beach over the years include Gyrfalcon, Reddish Egret and Arctic Tern. Adam Sell, a guide and tour manager for Chicago-based Red Hill Birding who has called Waukegan Beach his "local patch" for over 15 years, will tell us how to make the most of your visit there.