

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

February 2024



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

My Two Limpkin, One Gray-crowned Rosy Finch Day by Joel Greenberg



Limpkin by Cindy Kerchmar

Last fall in late October, the “local” Limpkin had been hanging out at McGinnis Slough (Cook County). Jayne Leone generously agreed to meet me there. She spotted it flying our way. As it walked through vegetation, it appeared and disappeared, but then flew into the open where we got a great look.

On my way home, Jayne called to say that DuPage County’s first Limpkin was being observed at Fullersburg Woods, very close to my house. Birders had first reported it a few days before, but my initial efforts to find it failed. When I arrived home, spouse Cindy was up for a search, so we headed to Fullersburg. We could

not find the Limpkin where the pin had been dropped. We checked one other area and were headed back in defeat when we encountered some birders who knew exactly where it was and agreed to take us there. I looked on the far bank of Salt Creek but no luck. Moments later I spotted it on the near bank very close to us.

Two limpkins in two counties in one day is noteworthy! It was only a few years ago when the first confirmed Limpkin for Illinois showed up in Olney. I saw that one with Dave Johnson, who drove the 230 some miles to the spot. Limpkins, whose US range used to be restricted to wetlands from Florida to southern Georgia, are now appearing throughout the east and Midwest, including one walking through a forest in the snow in northern Minnesota.

After I’d been home for a couple of hours, Andy Sigler called to say there was a Gray-crowned Rosy Finch at Northwestern University in Evanston. The first state record showed up some years ago at a feeder in Will County, but I was unable to chase it. Thus, this species would be a new state bird for me and only the third time I’d ever seen one. Paul Quintas agreed to go for it, too. It had been years since I was in the Northwestern area, and boy oh boy has it changed! Paul helped me find the site.



Gray-crowned Rosy Finch
By Scott Judd

The area behind it, once called “the landfill”, had been a largely open space that produced great birds over the years (my lifer Snowy Owl in December, 1967). Now it was largely covered with buildings. Fortunately, since it was Sunday, it was easy to park on campus, but I was not exactly sure where the bird was.

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After I talked with a few other birders, Paul appeared; it turned out the rosy finch was seconds away, feeding on a narrow strip of grass. It had been in the same place for hours.

My Illinois list now stands at 415!

When birds whose normal ranges are a long way from one another are seen by the same observers on the same day, it's a rare occurrence. Seeing these two species, one of the southern swamps and the other restricted to alpine regions of the northwest, made it a great birding day!

Horned Larks by Matt Tobin, North Park Marina

Lots of cool field trips on deck...



Saturday, March 30: Looney Trip, Lake County. Join David Johnson for another of his special trips around the Lake County lakes, looking for loons, pelicans, ducks and anything else he can find. Meet at 8:30 am, Gale Street Inn parking lot, Mundelein. Register with Dave at djohnsoda@comcast.net.

Then go to ensbc.org for the **Woodcock Walk at Air Station Prairie, April 13**, and **water birds at Big Marsh Park in Calumet on April 28**. Then check out our many **traditional spring walks, April 28 through June 8**, focusing on warblers and other migrants. Destinations include Gillson Park, Waukegan Beach, Perkins Woods, Skokie Lagoons, Northwestern University, Montrose Point and many others.

Conservation Alert: Edibles For The Environment by Donnie Dann



Does what you eat and drink really have an effect on the environment? Consider just 3 foods; meat, bananas and coffee, all 3 consumed in large amounts by people worldwide.

MEAT: Those yummy burgers. Or scrumptious filets. The savory juices, laden with flavor are dripping from the barbecue. Meanwhile, cattle ranching accounts for 80% of the Amazon rainforest's deforestation. Our "lungs of the earth" are steadily being cleared for a bite of beef. Next time you have a hankering for that juicy burger, could you consider an [alternative](#)? Per Reader's Digest, "It takes approximately [1,700 gallons of water](#) to produce a single pound of beef—but just 39 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of vegetables. By skipping meat one day a week, Americans could save an estimated [100 billion gallons of water](#) each year".



BANANAS: Thiabendazole, Nematicide, Mancozeb, Azoxystrobin, Imidacloprid and Chlorpyrifos (fatal to birds). To one degree or another, these and other chemicals are used in growing bananas on conventional plantations. Not all are equally harmful and keep in mind, most of what you consume is within the peel. Today, bananas are the most popular fruit in the United States, purchased by nearly 70% of people. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, at 57 cents a pound, they are also the cheapest item in the produce department by far. Organic bananas average only around 10-15 cents more per pound, so why not put organic bananas in your grocery cart?

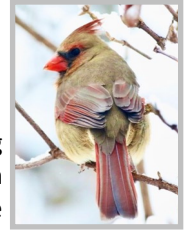
COFFEE: Coffee, northern Latin America's most important export crop, has traditionally been grown under the shade of native forest trees, providing essential habitat for an abundance of wildlife, and reducing the need for heavy treatment with fertilizers and pesticides. In Western Africa where coffee originated, it grows naturally as part of the forest understory and below the old growth canopy. Since the 1970s, however, many farmers have bulldozed their forest and switched to an open field full sun system to grow their coffee. This method has increased yields, but requires the use of more agro chemicals and essentially eliminates wildlife habitat.



The most effective motivation to farmers to retain their shade grown coffee farms and protect biodiversity in the process is economic. Shade grown coffee is available from a number of sources at a somewhat higher cost, but commensurate with far greater value for the environment. Speaking personally, I think it tastes better!



Another interesting North Shore Christmas Bird Count *by John Leonard*



Evanston North Shore Bird Club sponsored its 63rd annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Saturday, December 30, 2023. The CBC is the premier community science project, running now for 124 years.

This census is one of the few that accounts for the mileage and hours of observer's efforts and is thus useful for a variety of scientific studies. 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 of our 15-mile diameter count circle (centered at the intersection of Dundee Rd. and Skokie Blvd.), enjoyed light winds and mostly sunny conditions with temperatures between 27 and 37 degrees F. The total number of species (76) was above our average of 71 since 2000, and several unusually high and low numbers of individuals for particular species were noted. We collectively walked a total of 111 miles and drove another 197 miles to observe birds in daylight hours.

In addition, several participants set out before dawn to find owls; both Eastern Screech and Great Horned Owls were found in decent numbers. Owen Woodhouse also found a roosting Northern Saw-whet Owl in the daytime -- always a special discovery. Another owl sometimes seen in daylight, the Barred Owl, was found in record numbers (4) in 3 different locations. In 63 years we had never counted more than 2.

After allowing two days for the coordinators to pull their numbers together, John Leonard 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, is always of interest; especially

intriguing are the finding of abundant or missing species and the later stage of the countdown when less common and even surprising finds are revealed.

Karen Lund, David Johnson and Mike Levin discovered a Gray Catbird at Millard Park in juniper bushes that were full of berries. Although common in summer, only once every decade or so will one be found in late December in our area. Another record setting species was the Red-throated Loon. They have been putting on quite a show lately along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and the same three observers above, along with Josh Engel, Geoff Williamson, Chris Williamson, Rebecca Rice, Ed Rice, Matt Hayner and Kevin Swagel found a total of 5 of these uncommon loons.

Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to do well especially at Ryerson Woods and Fort Sheridan. The old record of 30 was smashed with 41 seen! Apparently, the oak-savannah restoration activities have paid off. Another iconic species, the Blue Jay, also smashed the old record with 337 seen (200 or fewer is typical). 2023 was an especially plentiful acorn crop year, so that may be an explanation. Probably due to the abundance of open water, there were no concentrations of waterfowl, and most of those species were present in low numbers. The mild weather also produced no Snow Buntings!

While no birds were uniquely found at feeders, 25 species were tallied at 16 stations, and their numbers significantly boosted our count of Mourning Doves, House Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, juncos, woodpeckers, cardinals 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. Combining both the field and feeders, we counted 14,283 birds!

*American Cardinals (above)
by Lorra Rudman*



American Tree Sparrow and Common Goldeneye, Independence Grove, by Matt Tobin

**Please welcome these
new members to the
flock!**

Phil & Yarina Birnbaum, Evanston

Betsy Brill, Evanston

Julia Bunn, Evanston

Susan Comstock, Evanston

Beth Hart, Evanston

Joy L. Joyce, Evanston

Deborah Lawrence, Evanston

Robert Linsenmeier, Evanston

Brooke Sprague, Skokie

Linda Vick, Morton Grove

Bird Calls is a publication of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club
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Send ideas, articles, photos to Marj Lundy, Editor, at catbird3@comcast.net.



What's the name of that bird?

(Excerpted from recent publication of the National Audubon Society)

The American Ornithological Society (AOS), the organization of bird scientists that determines official English and Latin names for North America's bird species, has announced that they are embarking on a process to change the English names of the approximately 152 North American birds and 111 South American birds named after people.

Why? A small but growing contingent of birders had been aware for years that these names could be harmful or exclusionary, given that many honor people now understood to have committed racist acts; the group had begun to favor moving away from them. But the effort took on new meaning and



Wilson's Warbler

haste during the racial reckoning that swept across the country and birding world in 2020. After the Chris Cooper Central Park incident, which occurred on the same day as George Floyd's murder, and the creation of Black Birders Week, birders Jordan Rutter and Gabriel Foley were inspired to found the "Bird Names For Birds" movement. They launched a petition to change common bird names to monikers that drop any association with people and instead describe species' appearance or ecology—attributes that are also more practical and helpful for making identifications in the field.

Birds named after people can be found in every section of a field guide, from the Bullock's Oriole to Ross's Goose and Wilson's Warbler. Although birders use these names on a regular basis, their origins can be opaque and have often been nearly forgotten. Across the globe, many of these names were coined in the 18th and 19th centuries as white naturalists "discovered" new birds in territories previously held by non-white peoples, naming them after the original collectors of bird specimens, fellow scientists, other prominent figures of the time, and even their family members.

The process of updating English names will continue to unfold for years to come, as it will take time to update field guides, apps, and other reference materials after new names begin to be announced. Birders, many of whom will not have been closely following this debate over the past three years, will need time to adjust to using unfamiliar names. Aligning the new names with the banding codes used by the United States Geological Survey and on platforms like eBird will also take time.

A separate AOS committee traditionally oversees the English names of birds mainly in South America, and they plan to eventually update South American bird names as well.

ENSBC needs a member to step forward to volunteer to be President. It is the least time-consuming position on the Board, presiding over quarterly Board meetings and calling our monthly meetings to order. Please contact Sarah Miller, sarahandsheldon@comcast.net.

We're waiting to hear from you.

Programs Comin, Up

Tuesday, February 27: Bob Dolgan, "Films and Fluddles". What do Montrose Point, The Magic Stump, and fluddles have in common? They are all topics of Bob Dolgan's films. Dolgan will join us to share excerpts of his work and some behind-the-scenes stories from the making of these films. He'll also highlight continued opportunities for advocacy and conservation. Dolgan is a birder, journalist, filmmaker and marketer who has made two films about Chicago's late Piping Plovers, Monty and Rose. His films "The Magic Stump" and "Fluddles" are the first two in a Prairie State trilogy about Illinois. **On Zoom. Social Time, 7:00 p.m. Program at 7:30.**

Tuesday, March 26: Vic Berardi, "Hawkwatching in Northeastern Illinois." Vic Berardi is a long time ENSBC member, veteran hawkwatcher and terrific photographer. Vic's presentation will include all the raptors regularly seen at Northeastern Illinois hawkwatch sites during the fall migration period, including Illinois Beach State Park, Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve and Greene Valley Forest Preserve. Vic will highlight the best fall times for sightings of each species and show photos and charts indicating trends over 24 years of data collecting. **In person at Robert Crown Community Center, 1801 Main St., Evanston at 7:30 p.m.**

Tuesday, April 23: Chris Whelan, "Nests and Nesting Ecology." The amazing diversity of bird species on Earth is matched by the diversity of nests that birds build, and the unique nesting ecology of each bird species. While some nests share certain characteristics (e.g., open cup, platform, pendulous), the nest of each species is unique. Many bird species are master builders. There are exceptions, of course, e.g., the Mourning Dove builds nests so flimsy they often do not last through the entire nest attempt. Chris will highlight the diversity of nests, nest-construction behavior and the importance of nesting ecology which human activity has affected, both for good and for bad. Chris Whelan, in the Biology Department, U. of I at Chicago, will share techniques for studying and quantifying bird nesting ecology, and controversies surrounding these techniques. **In person at Robert Crown Community Center, 7:30.**