

# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

February 2026



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

## Want to chase away the winter blues? How 'bout this?

Looking for an interesting and meaningful way to be creative? The crowdsourced environmental art project, ***Bird Collisions in the Anthropocene***, has recently moved its headquarters to a storefront in Evanston. With the aim of raising awareness about birds colliding with windows, the project invites the public to participate in the production of a 300-foot-long carpet of 10,836 bird replicas – one for each bird collected in Chicago in 2023.

Using upcycled donated cloth, scissors and glue, participants are assigned a specific bird that died from a window collision and are tasked with creating its replica. The completed bird is then tagged with the creator's name, hometown and date made, as well as details of the bird it depicts. A searchable database allows participants to locate their bird in the finished carpet.

Free workshops for birdmaking are held in the studio at 1522 Greenleaf Street in Evanston on the first Saturday of every month from 12 to 2 pm. **Holly Greenberg**, the artist behind the project, also distributes free materials for remediating problematic windows and teaches how to prevent bird collisions. You can also schedule a private party workshop at the studio or invite Holly to bring the workshop to your library, community center, park district or school. Contact [birdcollisionsproject@gmail.com](mailto:birdcollisionsproject@gmail.com) or visit the website: [birdcollisionproject.org](http://birdcollisionproject.org).



## Christmas Bird Count 2025! by John Leonard, Compiler

Evanston North Shore Bird Club sponsored its 65th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 27, 2025. The CBC is the premier community science project, running now for 126 years. This type of census is useful for a variety of scientific studies. We send our data to a central repository at the National Audubon Society.

Forty-eight dedicated birders participated in our 15-mile diameter count circle. They enjoyed relatively balmy, cloudy conditions with mild SE winds and temperatures from 38 to 42 degrees. The total number of species matched our average of 71 since 2000. Several unusually high and low numbers of individuals for particular species were noted. We collectively walked 89 miles, down from last year due to significantly fewer counters. So, we need more volunteers! Anyone?

A few birders set out before dawn searching for owls, and the Ryerson crew was particularly successful, finding 4 Barred Owls, matching the record. Jeff Bilsky broke our recent drought on Northern Saw-whet Owls, finding 2 within the count circle.

As has been the long-time tradition, we had an in-person count-down dinner at Libby Hill's home. Especially intriguing is finding abundant or missing species. Less common and surprising finds are revealed at the end. Only our second ever Eurasian-collared Dove found by Hazem Alkhan in nearly the same spot in Glenview where Joe Suchecki had one in 2001. Joe had a surprising

Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the Grove, and more surprising, Pam Karlson found one at Techny Basin. It's been 20 years since we had 2 on the count!

We broke our record of Pileated Woodpeckers, up from 5 to 6; on average only 1 has been seen on count day over the past 15 years. Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to do very well with a record 37 up from 30 last year. Stefanie Altneu found a Northern Pintail duck that finally appeared in the afternoon! Owen Woodhouse's team on the Lake was the only group to see any of several species of waterbirds and ducks including Cormorant and a Great Black-backed Gull. Thanks to later photographic review by Andre Vu, this team also found the second highest count of Pine Siskins ever in the flock at NWU (259!).

Red-breasted Nuthatches have irrupted in our region this year, producing a record 65 versus the prior record of 56 in 1993. An inland area produced the only Hermit Thrush, Green-winged Teal and Red-shouldered Hawk. The southernmost inland area had the only Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Two areas had sizeable numbers of Cedar Waxwings, an irruptive species that fluctuates wildly from year to year. It was also a blockbuster year for White-throated Sparrows with 95, over 40% higher than ever before!

Misses included loons, American Coot, Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Black-crowned Night Heron, Carolina Wren, Redpoll and White-crowned Sparrow!

### Don't miss these Programs

(More details at <https://www.ensbc.org>.)

**February 24, 7:30 pm on Zoom: "Know Those Birds!" John Bates.** An interactive primer on bird identification, how to have fun using a variety of approaches and tools to get better and check your work. John is Curator and Section Head, Life Sciences at the Field Museum.

**March 24, 7:30 pm in person at the Ecology Center: "Saving Chicago's Nighthawks." Edward Warden.** Once a common sight devouring insects every night, the increasingly un-common nighthawk is now in steep decline. Edward will highlight what the deal is on these birds, what we know and how to ensure Chicago remains a haven for them. He is President of the Chicago Ornithological Society and Stewardship Program Manager at the Chicago Park District.

**April 28, 7:30 pm in person at the Ecology Center: "How We Broke the Cook County Big Year Record!" Tarik Shahzad and Owen Woodhouse.** In 2024, Tarik broke the Cook County Big Year record after only two years of birding. He currently works for The Nature Conservancy's Illinois chapter. Owen is a 17-year-old birder and bird photographer based in Wilmette. He is an avid observer of any form of visual migration, including lakewatching, hawkwatching and morning flight counts. Owen completed a Cook County Big Year in 2022 at the age of 13.

(There will be a brief Annual Meeting before the Apr. 28th program.)



**Red-headed Woodpecker**  
by Peggy Reilly

## Field Trips, Comin' Up...and many more. Check the May calendar at [www.ensbc.org/](http://www.ensbc.org/)

**Gull Frolic: Sunday, February 15.** The Gull Frolic is a unique winter event at Illinois' premier gull-watching hotspot, North Point Marina, Winthrop Harbor, IL. Bring your binoculars, scope and cold weather gear, and join birders outside of the yacht club to enjoy a close study of some of our harder-to-find winter species. Click [2026 Gull Frolic at Winthrop Harbor - Illinois Audubon Society](#) for details and tickets (which are limited).

**Jeffrey Sanders Memorial Prairie Woodcock Walk, Air Station Prairie: Saturday, March 28.** Join us for our first opportunity this spring to look for the magical displays of the woodcocks at dusk. Meet at 6:30 p.m. on the deck of the Tyner Interpretive Center at Air Station Prairie, 2400 Compass Rd., Glenview. Register at [libbyhill@comcast.net](mailto:libbyhill@comcast.net). Leader: Tom Lally

**Looney Trip: Sunday, April 5.** Join David Johnson for another of his special trips around the Lake County lakes looking for loons, pelicans, ducks and anything else we can find. Meet at 8:30 a.m., Gale Street Inn parking lot, Mundelein. Register with David Johnson, [djohnsoda@comcast.net](mailto:djohnsoda@comcast.net) and Libby Hill [libbyhill@comcast.net](mailto:libbyhill@comcast.net).

**Waukegan Beach: Saturday, May 2.** We will spend the morning birding the beach, swales and wooded lots of the Waukegan Beach area. On the beach, we'll target migrant shorebirds and then, in the wooded lots and beachfront park, migrant warblers. We'll hike 1-2 miles at a birder's pace. Our leader will have a scope, but you're welcome to bring one. Hiking boots or sneakers are both appropriate, but be prepared for walking on sand. Duration about 3 hours. Meet at 7:30 a.m. See pin at <https://goo.gl/maps/1QFRdEPAA3J2fEg67>. Register at [libbyhill@comcast.net](mailto:libbyhill@comcast.net).



*Fall Ruby-crowned Kinglet by Lorra Rudman*

### Welcome to these new members of the flock:



April Campbell	Ann Arbor, Michigan
Mary Groot	Arlington Heights
Jennifer Schreiber	Wilmette
Kimberly Whalen	Chicago

### *Birding our Patches in Winter by Nancy Pinchar*

There are several ways to continue birding our north shore patches in winter, from observing backyard bird feeders to quick local trips for waterbirds.

On those days when it's bitter cold, get out your binoculars and watch a birdfeeder from the warmth of indoors. Over the course of a day, you'll see a variety of birds in and around your feeder or water source. Over several days, notice which birds show up at the feeder at different times of day, and you may find a pattern.

In my yard House Sparrows mob at first, but House Finches will elbow in. Under the feeder will be Mourning Doves, Dark-eyed Juncos, and sometimes a surprising special sparrow like Fox or White-throated. Northern Cardinals zoom in and out all day it seems, while Black-capped Chickadees seem to choose less crowded moments. A puffed-up American Robin pops in for a drink and flies off again. The suet feeder attracts Hairy, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, taking turns across the day. At times the birds will all fly up in a surge to safety, and I scan for a Cooper's Hawk that may be nearby. Always, there are squirrel antics to amuse (or anger.)

If you don't have a birdfeeder, take a short drive to the River Trail Nature Center in Northbrook to watch multiple feeders from multiple windows and experience even more local winter birds including American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, Blue Jay, and White-breasted Nuthatch. A special bonus is the short path to an often open stretch of the Des Plaines River where you might see waterbirds or a raptor.

Waterbirds may be found even closer on the Northwestern University campus lagoon (parking is free on weekends and after 4 on week days). On a short visit, you can find a fun variety of ducks. Over recent weeks eBird checklists included Red-head, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and all three types of mergansers. (If campus is open, the student center is a great place to warm up for a bit.) Two other locations to try, which usually have open water, are Gillson Park harbor in Wilmette and various stretches of the North Shore channel.

Settle in or bundle up and head out to a patch near you, but have fun birding this winter.

## Meet Leslie Shad, ENSBC Conservation Chair

*This is the first of a series of "Meet the ENSBC Board members" articles.*

Leslie grew up in New York City and the Berkshires with parents from Arkansas and Utah, spending time in beautifully diverse ecosystems. Her mom was always befriending an overwintering flying squirrel, rescuing birds, discovering newts under moss, and collecting dozens of dead bats from a colony of 2,500 that lived between the attic ceiling and roof lining. The family freezer routinely held 10 dead bats (next to the popsicles). The bats were collected and mailed to Massachusetts wildlife authorities for rabies testing. Leslie's dad loved the national parks, and her family visited new parks every year. For her, *nature was just the best part of being a kid.*

Leslie was a reporter for the Kansas City Star newspaper. After law school at the University of Chicago, she was a lawyer for firms in New York City and Amsterdam. Most recently, she spent 20 years as a corporate lawyer for the humanitarian non-profit CARE (care.org), supporting operations in more than 60 countries with a focus on Africa. She served as CARE's General Counsel for five years.

Leslie has been Conservation Chair and ENSBC Board member for several years. Before that, she worked with Libby Hill and others founding and developing Bird Friendly Evanston (BFE), a program of ENSBC that in 2019 began meeting with Evanston developers to encourage bird safe windows. BFE successfully advocated for the Bird Friendly Building Ordinance passed in 2022 and continues to monitor its implementation.

Active in other organizations, Leslie founded and leads Natural Habitat Evanston which aims to change the culture of lawns and gives native trees to schools, parks and homeowners in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> wards. She is chair of Climate Action Evanston, the mothership for diverse environmental programs focused on environmental justice, energy, waste, mobility, habitat and food access. She is also involved in the advocacy committee of Chica-

go Bird Alliance.

Leslie was on the board of National Wildlife Federation for nine years. She visited the wolf introduction program at Yellowstone in 1995 but only saw the release enclosure and a distant coyote. She and her husband are active volunteers with Shirley Heinz Land Trust in Northwest Indiana, where they help remove multiflora rose. They also work to remove invasive plants and encourage native species on 21 acres they own in Michigan City, Indiana.

There are always opportunities to advocate for positive change with local 'electeds and appointeds'. Leslie is exploring Evanston ordinances to preserve the Lakefront as a public/natural area, to address environmental inequities identified by the city, to preserve the city's natural areas, to reduce light pollution and to ensure the ban on gas leaf blowers stays in place. In Northwest Indiana, she is an advocate for preserving old trees through the Michigan City tree ordinance and publicizing preservation options for landowners.

In her free time, Leslie loves to watch what comes to native trees and shrubs she's planted. An eastern screech owl visited her Evanston neighborhood in January, and Barred and Screech Owls, two Merlin, and Pileated Woodpeckers are regulars at her Indiana house.

For 16 years she and her family have gone to the Sundance Film Festival in Park City Utah, not far from where her father grew up. She thinks Utah national parks (particularly Bryce) are the most spectacular. She also paints, darns socks, sails on her husband's boat, bakes bread and spends time with her two dogs (one a hyperactive puppy), two pet rabbits, a 40-year-old Ornate Box Turtle, three grown children and a very large and close extended family.

### **Book Corner** by Marj Lundy

I don't know how many of you see the Daily Herald, but I've been enjoying its birding column by **Jeff Reiter** for years. A member of the DuPage Birding Club, Jeff retired several years ago and has been, of course, pursuing his birding hobby and in addition, writing a book. **"The Best of Words on Birds"** was recently published. It includes not only a collection of his engaging birding columns but also tips on binoculars, making your yard bird-friendly, exploring destinations around the Midwest and more. One of his interests has always been bringing more people into birding, which he describes as the best hobby ever. Diann Bilderback, President of the Bird Conservation Network, says "I think Jeff's column has been a vanguard of the sport of birding, and I think he's helped a lot of people connect with it." I haven't read "Best Words" yet, but I'm about to get it immediately, if not sooner!



**Little Brown Bat**