

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

November 2019



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

Monty, Rose and the chicks capture our hearts!



Monty and Rose's two chicks

In June of this year, the two now-famous Piping Plovers who have come to be known as Monty and Rose reunited on Montrose beach in Chicago. They had previously met and mated on Waukegan beach in 2018, laying four eggs that would ultimately be incubated in captivity and result in one surviving chick.

On June 4th, Monty was observed scraping a nest in the middle of the sandy beach. He then proceeded with courting Rose and the two mated multiple times over the following days. Four eggs were laid in that first nest, an enclosure was installed and incubation started. An extensive volunteer effort was initiated to monitor the nest from dawn to dusk.

Unfortunately, a strong storm and lake surge threatened their nest on June 12, forcing the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to collect the eggs, just ahead of the nest going under a foot of water overnight. That first clutch was initially sent to the Lincoln Park Zoo for incubation, then to the specialized captive rearing facility run by the Detroit Zoo. Unfortunately, none of those eggs hatched.

Rose and Monty were distraught in the hours after the nest was lost, then slowly started focusing on breeding again. Eventually, both found their way to the high and dry sand area adjacent to the Bank Swallows nesting bank, fairly close to the volleyball courts, and a new nest was scraped and a first egg laid. Nearby volleyball posts from eleven courts were removed and an area bigger than a football field was roped off!

By June 24th, four eggs had been laid. Volunteers were scheduled again to watch the plovers and their nest from dawn to sunset. Rose and Monty went after perceived threats without hesitation, over time chasing away Killdeers, Spotted Sandpipers, Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Kingbirds, Barn Swallows, Gulls and even Mallards and Great Blue Herons! The dreaded July 4th week-end came and went, with scores of volunteers signing up to protect the nest and its area well into the night.

On July 17th, around 4:30 pm, the marvelous news broke through: Rose was seen carrying an egg shell away from the nest! Sure enough, shortly thereafter, the first tiny little chick was observed, first on the nest among the eggs, then, within three hours of hatching, exploring the confines of the wire enclosure. Within 24 hrs., more good news came through when two siblings hatched on July 18th. By the end of that day, the fourth egg was declared failed.

Three precious little chicks were hatched on a sandy beach in Chicago, for the first time since 1955! Birders and non-birders alike cheered! These little poof balls on sticks were so cute, capable of scurrying in the sand and feeding themselves shortly after hatching. In the first few days, they kept within feet of the brooding parents, feeding then running back to Mom or Dad, cramming their little heads against the parent's chest and wedging themselves safely beneath them, until one could only see an adult plover with four sets of legs. This little family on a very public beach in Chicago became ambassadors for their species and for birds in general, introducing many a visitor to the beauty of birds and the joy of birding for the very first time.

Another great year at Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary!

By Julie Dorfman



Photo by
Lloyd Davidson

We began the year with two main goals: nurturing and observing the 600 plus native beach plants installed last year and learning more about similar beach/dunesland sites so we can enhance the richness of CSBBS's biodiversity. In partnership with the City of Evanston, we also began observing and removing invasives south of Clark Street Beach beach house where we had begun to find natives learned about from the Montrose steward.

This spring we found that last year's efforts to control serious infestations of Bouncing Bet (a European wildflower) and Quack Grass were quite successful. One exciting find: in the dune area where the City helped us control Quack Grass last year, we have a big increase in native plants -- Rough Sand Sedge, Sand Dropseed, Illinois Tumbleweed and more! These hearty folks are exciting new species and indicators of healthy dune habitat. The majority of last year's new native plants survived the 2019 polar vortex and are thriving. Early on we also added Little Blue Stem and Switch Grass to open sandy areas and they're doing fine.

South of the beach house, the huge amount of rain and consequent lake level rise generated a "fluddle" which we nicknamed "Lake Evanston". For many weeks we couldn't work there, but as the water receded and we controlled White Sweet Clover and Sand Bar Willow, we found increased populations of native rushes, sedges, horsetails, forbs and other valuable beach plants that thrive in calcareous wetlands. Spotted Sandpipers nested in this area, and at least one chick fledged.

The expanding biodiversity continues to inspire us. We've now identified **113 plant species!** This success helped our energetic volunteers keep after White Sweet Clover, Horseweed, Sand Burs and other pesky challenges.

Butterflies and other pollinators have been abundant this year. A devoted beach volunteer has begun documenting **insects and arachnids -- 41 species** to date!

Which brings us to the learning goal. Our Steering Committee members -- who've done a terrific job this year -- contacted stewards at Montrose, Loyola and 63rd St. Beaches and Hosah Prairie. We visited each site and saw similar yet distinct dunesland plant communities. We saw beautiful stands of most of our plants, as well as some rare beauties that we dream of for the future. We're planning seed exchanges with some of these habitat groups, building community for both plants and people!

And are the birds happy? You bet! Suzanne Checchia again organized monitors during spring and fall migrations. Sightings of **172 bird species** are posted on [CSBBS Birds](#). Suzanne would welcome additional monitors for 2020.

Our amazing volunteers have put in over **500 hours** this year, and still counting. Come join us! We typically work Thursdays, 3-5:30 pm, and the 2nd Saturday of the month, 9-11:30 am.

We continue to develop our [CSBBS web site](#) and [Facebook page](#). Thinking of a donation? Make checks out to Evanston North Shore Bird Club with CSBBS in the memo and send to ENSBC c/o Libby Hill 2715 Woodland Road, Evanston, IL 60201. Or see the link on our web site or [ENSBCs](#).

And we can't thank Julie Dorfman and Jerry Herst enough for leading this effort!

Nearly 3 Billion Birds Gone!!

The recent Cornell study reporting a nearly 30% decline in bird populations -- some 2.9 billion breeding adult birds -- in the continental U.S. and Canada over the last 50 years is devastating news. Quoting from the report, published in the September 2019 issue of the journal *Science*:

"Our results signal an urgent need...to avert continued biodiversity loss and potential collapse of the continental avifauna."

To read the full study or the article from Cornell's *Living Bird* magazine, click the following link: [Cornell](#).
And what can you do? Go to [Actions to help Birds](#)

Joel Greenberg remembers Bob Russell



In early July, I received an email from Kim Eckert that our beloved mutual friend Bob Russell had passed. Bob has been a key part of my life-long interest in birding. We first met in September 1967 on an ENSBC field trip to Illinois Beach State Park when I was 12 years old and had only been birding since the previous November. A few years later, Bob led me, my mother and sister on a January trip to the Duluth area and Sax Zim bog long before it was popular.

My first birding trip west was to CA in August 1969 with Kim Eckert and Bob in Bob's Volkswagen beetle. I inhabited the backseat for the duration but wound up with 73 lifers including my 401st, the California Condor. After my freshman year of college, I took a semester off and headed for the Cape Clear Bird Observatory in Ireland, where Bob was serving as warden. (He made me Assistant Warden, a position that appeared on my earliest resumes.) I could go on and on sharing our time together. Fortunately, I spent a day with Bob this April when he came to give a talk for the Bird Club. He had recently retired after a long career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, where he devoted himself to bird conservation. I am still struggling with his loss, as are his many other friends.

Photo by Kim Eckert



To the Following New Members:

Pauline Clower	Wilmette
Chris Heisinger	Evanston
Lyn Persson	Evanston
Amy Lardner	Chicago
Ben Matsumoto	Evanston
Ted Wolff	Chicago

Remembering Pat Ware

Pat and Jim Ware were stalwarts of ENSBC. Jim passed away some years ago, but Pat, who served two terms as president, died more recently. They made a point of mentoring young birders. Steve Mlodinow credits them with really helping him in his early birding years. As a bar mitzvah present, Pat brought him down to their condo in Naples, FL where she took him birding everywhere. Joel Greenburg remembers Pat and Jim perhaps most vividly for their hosting of the dinner following the Chicago North Shore Christmas Bird Count. They provided a wonderful dinner that became a model for the event.

Christmas Bird Count...comin' up

Christmas bird counts are the largest volunteer effort in the world to monitor birds and changes over the years, since 1900. Get involved! Call the organizer for assignments. Don't want to go out in the cold? Ask about feeder watches or helping with the count dinner.

December 15 – Sunday: 54th Chicago Urban Count. Organizer/ compiler: Jeffrey Sanders, yellowstart5@yahoo.com 847-675-7172.

December 25 – Wednesday: Chicago Lakefront Christmas Count. Organizer: Joel Greenberg, joelgreenberg@gmail.com

December 28 – Saturday: 59th Chicago-North Shore Count and ENSBC post-count potluck dinner at Libby Hill's house, 2715 Woodland Rd, Evanston. Arrive any time after 4 pm. Contact Libby at libbyhill@comcast.net or 847-475-2096 for information. Co-organizers: John Leonard and Joel Greenberg.

January 1, 2020 – Wednesday: Waukegan Christmas Count. Organizer: Joel Greenberg, joelgreenberg@gmail.com. Compiler: Adam Sell.

Sunday, November 24, 2019: 50th Annual Jeff Sanders' Fall Specialty Trip

North Shore lakefront including Northwestern, Gillson Park, Maple Park, Tower Road Park, Park Ave., Rose Beach in Highland Park and more.

See <http://www.ensbc.org/> for details or contact Jeff at 847-675-7172 or yellowstart5@yahoo.com.

Our 5th special program of ENSBC's 100th anniversary year

Tuesday, November 19, 2019: Bethany Barratt, "Birding in Wonderland: Yellowstone." As one of the world's largest intact temperate ecosystems, Yellowstone is a vast natural laboratory for studying species interactions, climate change, disease pathology and more. Bethany, a Roosevelt University faculty member, has also been a volunteer for the National Park Service. Don't miss hearing about her inspiring and sometimes hilarious experiences involving relationships between humans and other species.

Please note: the meeting location is Levy Center, 300 Dodge Ave., Evanston, in the Linton Room, 7:30 pm. Also, this is the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

A week after hatching, the little chicks had quadrupled in size. Highly-committed volunteers, as well as Louise Clemency and Kris Lah from the FWS and Brad Semel from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources kept a watchful eye, inviting gulls and Great Blue Herons to relocate and chasing off-leash dogs away.

Perfect joy was not to last long. On the 28th of July, about 11 days after hatching, one of the chicks was observed lethargic and immobile on the sand, eyes closed. The chick was captured and taken to the Lincoln Park Zoo where immediate care was provided. Unfortunately, the Piping Plover family had lost one of its young ones by the next morning, to great sadness by all.

The remaining two siblings continued to thrive, growing under our watchful eyes. They began looking like miniature adults, joining Dad in chasing their favorite target, Spotted Sandpipers, and doing charming little hopping flights. Mom Rose left first, as is typical for shorebirds. By August 5, she was no longer to be found on the beach, likely on her way South for a well-deserved winter break. Rose gained our admiration when she laid two clutches of four eggs within a couple of weeks of each other, incubated the second clutch through heat, storms and July 4th fireworks, and vigorously defended eggs and chicks from countless intruders.

Monty continued to carefully watch the chicks, never letting his guard down and chasing intruders away. On August 10, both chicks turned 23 days old, prompting the Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Program to record Chicago as officially fledging two chicks, the first such event since 1955. A day later, the recently-fledged young plovers displayed their flying chops by traversing in flight the equivalent of some three football fields. Soon they left their protective enclosure and were feeding on the public beach. Later they would make their way to the protected beach, feeding there and resting in the grass where the dunes meet the beach, spending much of their time with each other. As for Monty, he was last seen on the beach on August 15th. He gained an ardent following for his fancy courtship moves, his territorial defending skills and his deeply attentive care of his offspring.

The two young plovers continued to thrive after Monty's departure, hanging out with migrating shorebirds on the beach, chasing others away, feeding out on the pier. As these Chicago-hatched Piping Plovers were not banded, so as not to further stress them, we will likely never know what their future holds and what their fate is. By any measure, the nesting and then hatching of three Piping Plover chicks at Montrose beach, an urban beach in the country's third largest city, has been a tremendous success.

If it can happen in Chicago...can it happen in Evanston?

by Tamima Itani

Tamima Itani is a retired professional who worked in the medical devices sector. She is a board member and treasurer of the Illinois Ornithological Society and co-leads the Chicago Audubon Society Advocacy Task Force. In partnership with colleagues from the Illinois Ornithological Society and the Chicago Ornithological Society, she led the volunteer coordination efforts which included nearly 200 volunteers and consisted of 70-100 volunteer shifts per week from early June until mid-August.

Live Raptors Featured at Fall Event

On Sunday, September 8th, the Evanston Public Library partnered with Evanston North Shore Bird Club for a program entitled "Raptors Up Close and Personal." This exciting family event, featuring live birds, was presented by the Cook County Forest Preserve District's River Trail Nature Center, represented by naturalist Ryan DePauw and volunteer Deborah Cohen. During the 90-minute program, Deborah escorted a Barred Owl around the room for all to see, allowing photographs and time to admire the beautiful bird. Ryan DePauw did the same with a Swainson's Hawk.



Barred Owl

Both raptors had suffered an injury or impairment that would not allow them to survive in the wild. Responding to a question from one of the program attendees, Ryan said that these birds' normal life expectancy in the wild is between 12 and 15 years. Under the expert care of dedicated care givers, however, the life expectancy is from 20 to 25 years.



Swainson's Hawk

In addition to an up-close look at the owl and hawk, there were samples of study skins, wings, beaks and talons for attendees to examine and better understand what features the birds have for catching their next meal. A popular event, extra chairs were needed to accommodate the audience of some 60 people. Many thanks to the Library and Nature Center for sharing their information and feathered friends with us.

Photos and commentary by Mark Vaughan