

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

November 2020



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

The North Shore Channel Habitat Project: A "Channel Lands Greenbelt"

A longtime favorite ENSBC birding area is getting a makeover!

In 1960, the City of Evanston secured long-term leases of North Shore Channel lands on the City's west side from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. Twelve years later, in line with the City's commitment to conservation, a plan was devised envisioning a "channel lands greenbelt."

Over time these lands have become an important corridor for migratory birds and other wildlife. Improving and expanding bird habitat is the mission of The North Shore Channel Habitat Project, a partnership of government, nonprofit groups and community volunteers.

A 2016 grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Chi-Cal Rivers Fund provided a major boost to the project. The grant made it possible to purchase hundreds of plants and engage bird expert Judy Pollock and Living Habitats, an ecological landscape design firm, to advise the project team.



After Civic Center workday, by Wendy Pollock

**Swainson's
Thrush,**

by Josh Engel.



The project includes 4 sites – Ladd Arboretum, Twiggs Park, Harbert-Payne Park and the Morton Civic Center Habitat Garden. Volunteers clear invasives and then plant native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses. These sites are part of a network of Evanston natural areas that includes Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary.

The Morton Civic Center Habitat Garden was established the following spring. With its prominent location, the garden reflects the City's commitment to expanding natural habitat on public land while demonstrating the principles of bird- and pollinator-friendly landscape design. What had been a grassy area between a Siberian elm and locust tree was transformed with the planting of a burr oak, understory trees, and hundreds of wildflower and grass plugs. Steward Doug Macdonald, with neighbors Peter Glaser and other volunteers, have continued to manage and improve the garden.

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By late 2017, community members joined in a planting day that was the beginning of a now-thriving prairie behind the Ecology Center (see below.) Planting has continued along the banks in the direction of Green Bay Road, and this year, volunteers, led by stewards Wendy Pollock and Tony Rothschild, also have been working on a trail. The Evanston Environmental Association and other private supporters are helping to support plant purchases now that the NFWF grant has ended. More than 40 species of woody plants and 80 species of flowers, grasses, and sedges have been planted.

Photo by
Wendy Pollock



The intention is to greatly increase the diversity of plants, which in turn support a growing diversity of insects and birds. Some dead trees have been left as habitat; one was home to Red-bellied Woodpeckers this spring, while another was briefly occupied by a Great Blue Heron, attracting the attention of birders.

Josh Engel added, "On one September visit, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Swainson's Thrushes, and Purple Finches gobbled down berries, various warblers flitted

about after insects, and goldfinches and Pine Siskins noshed on wildflower seeds."

Small patches were also cleared and planted around existing observation decks in Twiggs Park, across from the arboretum, and in Harbert-Payne Park. This 13-acre city park stretches from Main Street north to Dempster along the east bank of the channel. Under a canopy of mature cottonwood trees, birds and bird-watchers flock to the 3-acre forest nestled within, where Kentucky and Mourning Warblers, plus a pair of nesting wood thrushes, were among the 155 bird species reported this spring for this eBird hotspot.

Community members have cleared the thickets of invasive buckthorn from two swaths of the Harbert-Payne Park woods and replanted bird-friendly native shrubs and herbaceous plants. Under steward Allison Sloan, work this year has focused on expanding this woodland habitat into surrounding grass lawn with the planting of a native forest, and laying a network of wood chip paths.

Although funding is now scarce, the City forestry and greenways divisions and community volunteers (new ones always welcome!) continue their collaboration. With stewards of Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary and Perkins Woods, they look forward to City Council's adoption of an ordinance that gives official recognition to the natural areas they are creating, improving and managing.

*By Wendy Pollock (with comments
on Harbert-Payne Park by Allison Sloan)*

Bird-Safe Buildings Act passed U.S. House of Representatives!

"Following a rare show of bipartisan support, the Bird-Safe Buildings Act of 2019 has passed the United States House of Representatives and is now headed for consideration **by the Senate**. The bill would require 'each public building constructed, acquired, or of which more than 50% of the facade is substantially altered' by the General Services Administration (GSA) to meet a new set of design standards geared toward eliminating collisions between birds and the structures in question. Songbirds are the most at risk. The nighttime collisions and deaths are about lighting policies and the daytime collisions are about a building's design. We can avoid both." (Archinect News)

The bill was introduced by U. S. Congressman Mike Quigley from Illinois. Thank you, Mike!!!

Upcoming Field Trip

Sunday, November 22 — Jeff Sanders' Fall Specialty Trip North Shore lakefront: Gillson Park, Maple Park, Tower Road Park, Park Ave., Rose Beach in Highland Park, and more. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Gillson Park Beach. Preregister with Jeff Sanders, yellowstart5@yahoo.com, 847-675- 7172. Carpool only with other members of the same household. Bring your own scope since leader will not be scope-sharing. Social distancing and masks required.

Christmas Bird Count 2020

As of now, the ENSBC bird count will be held with Covid-19 requirements. The Club's countdown party is cancelled. The feeder count will go on as usual. Additional CBC information will be posted at <http://www.ensbc.org/> as it becomes available. The official Audubon Society statement on CBCs 2020 and COVID can be found at <https://www.audubon.org/news/christmas-bird-count-compiler-announcements>.

Upcoming ENSBC Programs on Zoom

All at 7:30 pm, (open for social visiting at 7:00) except Nov. 22 at 2:00 pm



November 22, 2:00-3:30 pm:
"Raptors, Up Close and Personal"

Special Presentation: Our second annual partnership with Evanston Public Library and the Forest Preserves of Cook County's River Trail Nature Center. Want to know more about the 20 kinds of raptors (hawks, falcons, eagles) that live in or migrate through our area? Join naturalist Ryan DePauw from River Trail Nature Center. Ryan will talk about birds of prey, how they hunt and raise families, and which ones are found on the North Shore. You'll get to see a live raptor up close (on Zoom) as Ryan tells you about the unique adaptations these animals use to survive. This event is sponsored by the Evanston Public Library in partnership with the Evanston North Shore Bird Club. Watch for the zoom invitation on our website or in an eblast.

November 24: Gustavo Ustariz, "Honduras: Birding and its Relationship to Coffee, Climate & Economic Development" Gustavo has worked in tourism development for over 15 years, mainly with communities and local governments in Honduras. His work includes promoting community-based tourism with a local NGO on the north coast of Honduras and developing tourism and guide-training projects there. He will discuss the importance of Honduras to the extraordinary diversity of birds there, including many migrants familiar to bird club members.

January 26, 2021: Geoff Williamson: "Radar and Birding" Radar imagery is increasingly referenced in the birding community to help determine 'good' birding days. Learn how radar can detect birds, where to find radar forecasts, how to interpret the patterns displayed, and how radar can be used to assess the strength of bird migration movements. Geoff is active in local, state and national birding organizations. He is a recipient of the American Birding Association's Ludlow Griscom Award, given for outstanding contributions in regional ornithology. He founded Third Coast Birding to foster an appreciation for and connection to the birds of the Great Lakes region and beyond.

February 23, 2021: Jacob Drucker: "Everything You Wanted to Know About eBird" eBird is a flagship community science effort that has not only redefined the recreational birding world, but has become a powerful tool for biologists looking to understand the relationship between birds and their environment. Jacob Drucker is a Ph.D. student, Committee on Evolutionary Biology, Field Museum/University of Chicago. His talk will explore the plethora of applications for eBird's standard data unit: the checklist. From enhancing models of changing distributions and mapping migratory flyways to scaling up behavioral studies on cooperative breeding and informing landscape management, there is no shortage of ways for biologists to tap into this unique 21st century resource. See what happens after you click 'submit'!

ENSBC Adopts Perkins Woods!

Evanston's Perkins Woods, at around 7 acres, is the smallest parcel owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Purchased in 1918, it was named after Dwight Perkins, architect of Perkins and Will, father of the Forest Preserves, and a neighbor to the woods.



Turk's Cap Lilies at Perkins
by Libby Hill

Perkins has been a focal activity of ENSBC since the 1950s, when members planted spring ephemerals rescued from areas being developed in nearby states. But, according to the late Barbara Nobles, a long-time member, as soon as they put them in, someone would steal them.

Almost all Perkins' mature elms were lost in the 1960s to Dutch Elm Disease, and recently, its green ash fell victim to the Emerald Ash Borer. Volunteers have been removing buckthorn, the most common invasive species, for perhaps 20 years, but the birds always bring it back, having feasted on the berries from female trees outside Perkins.

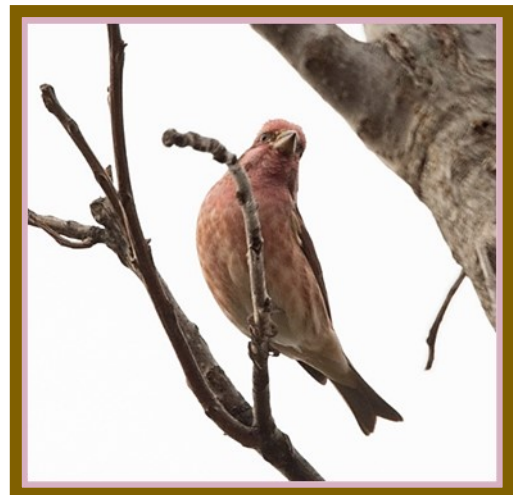
During May and September, ENSBC has led bird walks in Perkins; members have helped fund projects there. Promoting workdays (new volunteers always welcome!) and perhaps raising funds for more plantings are other ways the Club can help. It seemed natural to make official the already unofficial affiliation between ENSBC and Perkins, a preserve beloved by many.

by Libby Hill



New Members — Welcome to the Flock!

James Biggs	Evanston
Maureen Buchholz	Highland Park
Jennifer Hager	Evanston
Liz Natale	Morton Grove
Jennifer Parelo	
& Christine Peters	Evanston
Edie Rubinowitz	Evanston
Ann Thompson	Evanston
Dixie Watterson	Evanston
Teri Weber	Winnetka



Purple Finch by Josh Engel



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

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