

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

MARCH 2012 www.ensbc.org



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

FROM PET MUSKRATS TO PICKLED LIZARDS: NANCY HALLIDAY EXHIBITS AT GLENVIEW PUBLIC LIBRARY

Besides contributing our Bird Call's Northern Shrike logo and serving on ENSBC's board, Nancy Halliday is a gifted and extraordinary scientific illustrator. A sampling of her work, both fine art and illustration, will be displayed from March 1st to April 29th at the Glenview Public Library, 1930, Glenview Rd., Glenview. Nancy will also give a Gallery Talk there about her artwork and career on April 24th at 6:30 p.m.



The Artist at Work Photo by Tim Wallace.

Nancy has been a professional illustrator from the time she sold her first commission of a horse in 1956. This exhibit will showcase Nancy's broad range of talents throughout her career from water colors to scratch board to pen and ink. Besides 11 framed art pieces, some of Nancy's many scientific illustrations will be displayed in the library's museum case.

The stories behind Nancy's work are just as varied as the media she uses.

Nancy painted the watercolor of a Gray-necked Chipmunk with rock and grasses in 1963. Having graduated with a B.S. in Zoology from University of Oklahoma, Nancy was searching for a permanent job. In the mean time, she was hired as the summer assistant at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. Museum staff lived on the grounds giving Nancy quite a bit of free time. Admiring the many Gray-necked Chipmunks scampering about, Nancy resolved to paint one.

"I set out a baited trap, and I tried and tried to catch one. Finally, I left the trap un-baited, and then I caught one. He was the most beat up, scrawniest, little thing. So I put him in the terrarium, and I fed him oatmeal and peanut butter. It took a while for me to paint the background, and when I took him out of the terrarium, he was so sleek and fat, I couldn't believe it," Nancy said.

After painting him, Nancy eventually let him go, but believes that his improved health may have bettered his chipmunk social standing.

Another small mammal became a sort of pet. During the 1970s while serving as scientific illustrator for the Florida State Museum in Gainesville, Nancy made a scratchboard drawing of a Round-tailed Muskrat on the water with lotus leaves.

"I was doing some free lance oil paintings of birds for a nature center. While I was installing these, I saw running around the edge of this building a little rat-like thing.

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ENSBC SLATE OF NOMINEES

Each year, ENSBC elects a slate of officers to serve from June to June. We will vote on these nominees at the April program night.

If you would like to be considered for a board position, please contact Gary Hantsbargar at ghantsbargar@yahoo.com.

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THIS POSITION IS CURRENTLY UNFILLED

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NANCY HALLIDAY CONTINUED FROM COVER



Nancy's Pet Muskrat
Photo by Tim Wallace.

I came closer and closer to it, and it wouldn't move. I thought something was wrong with it. I thought I'd take it home and see what I could do with it. I decided to keep this critter, and I made three portraits over two years," said Nancy.

"She liked to eat oatmeal and carrots. She wouldn't eat anything else. To paint her, I'd have to put her in a glass jar, and she would get mad and grind her teeth. To placate her, I put a toothbrush in and combed her hair and oh, she liked that."

In 1981, a noted authority on the Kimodo Dragon asked Nancy to paint a poster of the Gray's Monitor Lizard for the Rare Animal Relief Effort. The four-foot long lizard was in danger of extinction in the Philippines, where families hunted it for food. The Philippine-language poster asked people not to hunt the lizard. While many of Nancy's paintings are life-size, her 18 by 24 inch poster is only half as big as the actual Monitor. Using photographs of plants, Nancy painted the Monitor on a tree surrounded by native vegetation. To paint the lizard, Nancy was loaned a preserved four-foot specimen to take home. She had to keep the pickled lizard in water so it would

not dry out. Since the preservative bleached out the reptile's natural color, Nancy used photographs to reproduce its actual green hue.

Nancy's more recent works include a 2008 landscape of the Hayden Valley at Yellowstone National Park. As a founding member of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, Nancy attends the annual Guild meetings held on college campuses during the summer when dorms and classrooms are cheapest. Travelling to Bozeman, Montana in 2007, Nancy suggested that as long as the Guild was meeting in such a beautiful environment, "Why don't we go out and do some painting. Five of us rented a car and a space at a ranch. We were stopping and painting and taking photographs. One day we went to Yellowstone. We took a picture late in the afternoon, and when I saw this, I said it was such a beautiful scene, I should do a painting of it," she said.

Other works to be featured include the Manitoba Great Gray Owl painting, prints of which were previously offered for sale to ENSBC members, Nancy's illustrations from the Mammals of North America field guide, her National Wildlife Federation stamps and a 24-inch long Tallgrass Prairie plant sequence.

*Nancy displays the
Gray's Monitor Lizard*
Photo by Tim Wallace.



KEEP AN EYE ON: GRANT PARK TRANSFORMATION By Charlotte Adelman

The January 25, 2012 Sun Times headline screamed: "20-acre Grant Park site to feature hills, climbing areas, skate 'ribbon.'" The article announced the Chicago Park District's plan to transform a stretch of Grant Park into an area "featuring sloping hills and valleys and dotted with play areas and forested paths." The area, known as Daley Bicentennial Plaza, between Randolph and Monroe, is connected to Millennium Park by a Frank Gehry-designed bridge. The current square ice skating rink will be replaced by a meandering ice skating "ribbon" that will surround "more natural looking" climbing walls. There will be a skateboard park and a scooter plaza. According to a principal of the New York-based landscape architecture firm hired to

work on the project, the design is intended to balance a regional attraction with a neighborhood park.

But this was the alarming part: "Hundreds of mature trees will come down as part of the garage project," said Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Conservancy. There is a "silver lining." "The trunks will be recycled and reused for a curving wall in a children's play area at the rehabbed park." Or, to put it another way, surrounding the children's play area will be a graveyard of dead trees.

A Chicago Park District official promptly returned my telephone inquiry. Michael Lang explained that the Daley Bicentennial Plaza will be closed for more than two years starting this fall. The park

and all its vegetation has to be destroyed in order to repair the leaking membrane that lines the underground parking garage roof beneath the park. Though no specific plants have been chosen to replace the doomed native honey locust trees, the plan does call for installing native Midwestern plants.

If the redevelopment goes as planned, nature lovers, including bird watchers should have nothing to worry about. But, the ENSBC (and others with concerns and/or suggestions) would be wise to contact Michael Lang, Chicago Park District, at 312-742-4650, from time to time, and ensure that the new landscaping, which affects the entire Chicago area, is in fact bird-friendly.

LIFERS

By Eleonora DiLiscia

I was filling my backyard feeders when I noticed a lovely bright male cardinal perched in my tree. Suddenly, I heard a cricket sound, which was odd because it was winter. Imagine my surprise when the cardinal reached into his breast feathers and pulled out a small device akin to a miniature I-phone. The cricket sound was his ring tone. A female Cardinal came up behind him.

"Who is that, dear?" she said.

"Oh, it's a text from that Pine Siskin I told you about. He figured he would pick up some life humans, while he is here for the winter. He wants to see some species from India. He is asking for directions."

The Cardinal punched a number and began talking into the device.

"Where are you now?" he asked. The device answered, "I'm just north of Howard west of Lehigh."

The Cardinal sighed, "Hmmm. OK. Go back to Lehigh. You're going to see a railroad track."

"Wait. Oh, yes. There it is," answered the device.

"Good. You're going to follow the track south. You're going to come to a crossing, go through the first crossing until you get to a second crossing. Then, make a left. Fly about four miles. You're going to see a canal. You're going to pass the canal and about a mile or so later, you're going to see some stores with humans in bright clothing. That's their plumage. If you get to the lake, you've gone too far."

After a few minutes, the device piped up, "I see them! I see them! They're so beautiful! Look at them. They're so many!"

"Oh, that reminds me," said the Cardinal. "You might see some Pakistanis mixed in."

"Oooh. Pakistanis! That would be another lifer. How do I tell spot them?" gushed the device.

"The plumage of the females is a little different, the dresses tend to average shorter and the legs are more visible but still covered. Also, listen to their song."

Just then the device beeped. Another text.

"Todd, that Towhee we had dinner with, is looking for an Argentinean," the Cardinal explained to the female. He says there's supposed to be one in a mixed flock of Mexicans and Cubans. He thinks he's got it, but he's not sure on his ID."

"When he finds one, tell him to let us know," said the female. "I need Argentinean for my year list."

The Cardinal resumed talking into the device, "The Argentinean averages a little lighter. Also they have a slightly different song. Very similar to a Mexican or Cuban, but a little more melodious, sort of like a Mexican's crossed with an Italian's."

The Cardinal paused, then continued, "Oh, you also want an Italian." He turned to the female. "Dear, do you happen to remember that place that was really reliable for Italians? You know the one where we see them every year?"

She shook her head. "Do you mean the one in Niles or the one south?"

"I'm Italian," I piped up helpfully. "He could come here."

I could swear both Cardinals rolled their eyes, if that were possible. "Thanks," the male said with a trace of sarcasm. "But you are an American subspecies. He wants an Italian full species, not a mere subspecies."

"Oh, well then, never mind," the mere subspecies replied. Gee, I was only trying to help.



*A female Cardinal contemplates where to find lifers.
Photo by Tim Wallace.*

PROGRAM NIGHTS

Club programs are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Evanston Ecology Center, 2024 McCormick Blvd., Evanston.

March 27 – “The Butterflies of the American Prairie”: Learn about the life cycle, ecology, and conservation of the butterflies of northeastern Illinois with Doug Taron, Curator of Biology at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. Doug will introduce butterflies from the region’s prairies, wetlands, woodlands and urban areas through words and photos. The presentation also includes an update on the Nature Museum’s butterfly conservation project.

April 24 – “Poetry is Not Just for the Birds”: Birds live in poetry, as themselves and as metaphors, in as astounding a profusion and diversity as in life. John Elliott, Education Manager of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, will lead us through a sampling of different poetic styles and subjects, discussing how writers from the past and present use poetry to enhance their own appreciation of the world around them. Anyone interested in the natural world and birds can be inspired to incorporate writing and/or reading poetry as another way of enjoying the behavior and antics of our feathered friends. Participants are encouraged to bring a sample of their own or a favorite bird poem.

FIELD TRIPS

MARCH 17, 2012 - SATURDAY

3rd Annual Memorial Ralph Herbst Duck Trip, Palos region. Bird the lakes and ponds of the Palos region for a variety of spring waterfowl. Meet at 7:30 a.m. From I-55, exit south on to US Rte. 45/LaGrange Rd. Head straight south to the McGinnis Slough parking lot on the west side of LaGrange Rd. Leader: Jeff Sanders.

MARCH 24, 2012 – SATURDAY

Air Station Prairie Woodcocks. NEW TRIP!!! Come out to see the spectacular aerial displays of the American Woodcock at dusk! The Air Station Prairie in Glenview is a great location for these displays and we may even spot a woodcock on the ground. Meet on the deck of the interpretive center at 6:45pm. Leader: Sulli Gibson.

APRIL 1, 2012 - SUNDAY

Looney Trip, Lake County. A Dave Johnson specialty. Loads of loons and lots of lakes. Expect other birds as well. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Breezewald Park off Old Rand Rd in Lake Zurich. Watch Bird Calls for directions. Leader: David B. Johnson.

APRIL 14, 2012 - SATURDAY

North Glenview. A tour through the better birding areas that North Glenview has to offer by local birder, Sulli Gibson. We will most likely bird Techny Basin Conservation Area, Lake Glenview and the Air Station Prairie for early migrants and lingering waterfowl. Techny Basin is located west of Waukegan Rd., south of Willow Rd., and east of Ravine Way in Glenview. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the gravel parking lot on Claire Ct. off of Ravine Way. The trip will last approximately 3 hours, but you are welcome to leave at any time. Leader: Sulli Gibson.

APRIL 22, 2012 - SUNDAY

Jackson Park and Lakefront – Wooded Isle. A perennial favorite among club members, this trip is excellent for early migrants. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Park south of the Museum of Science and Industry after driving on the east side of the building. Leader: Dick Young.

APRIL 28, MAY 5, MAY 12, MAY 19, 2012 – SATURDAYS

Spring Saturday mornings at Northwestern Lakefill and Sailing Beach.

This area has long been a stopover for migrants of all kinds headed north. Park on the lakeside of the upper deck of the south parking lot off of Sheridan Rd. and Clark St., north of Clark St. beach, at 8:30 a.m. Leaders: Sue Robert and Libby Hill on 28th and 12th. Libby Hill and Wayne Svoboda on 5th. Leader on 19th: TBA

MAY 4, MAY 11, MAY 18, 2012 – FRIDAYS

Fridays at Skokie Lagoons. These Friday trips pack a great list of warbler species during spring migration. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Forest Preserve parking lot north of Willow Rd. just east of the Edens Expressway. Leader: Lynne Carpenter on 4th and 11th. Joel Greenberg on 18th

MAY 5, 2012 - SATURDAY

Illinois State Spring Bird Count. Contact Joel Greenberg for Lake Co. assignments (630-725-6660). Contact Alan Anderson for Cook Co. assignments (casresearch@comcast.net or 847-390-7437).

MAY 5 - SATURDAY

Perkins Woods Garlic Mustard Pull. Help rid the woods of this aggressive non-native weed. Perform a good deed, be among friends, and enjoy birds and wildflowers. Come for an hour or a morning, 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Perkins Woods is at Colfax and Ewing between Central St. and Golf Rd. in Evanston. Leader: Libby Hill.

MAY 10, MAY 17 AND MAY 24, 2012 - THURSDAYS

Ryerson Woods. Check out the spring migrants and returning breeders at this beautiful Lake County forest preserve. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Brushwood parking lot. Ryerson Woods is on Riverwoods Rd, northwest of Deerfield. Leader: Gary Hantsbarger.

SPECIAL EVENT

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 7 PM

“The Resplendent Quetzal and the endemic birds of Guatemala’s Central Highlands: Community-based cloud forest conservation among the Q’eqchi’ Maya” at the Regenstein Center Auditorium, Chicago Botanic Garden. Call CBG at (847) 835-5440 for details or see http://www.chicagobotanic.org/calendar/event/resplendent_quetzal. This event is cosponsored by ENSBC.



Purple Sandpiper
Photo by Tim Wallace.