

# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

NOVEMBER 2012 [www.ensbc.org](http://www.ensbc.org)



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

## A PLACE WHERE KIDS CAN BELONG: THE ILLINOIS YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

By Eleonora di Liscia

Imagine you live on an island. Your island is a pretty fascinating place, but you wonder sometimes if there is anyone else out there who is just like you. Then one day, you find a message in a bottle.

Which is why clubs like Illinois Young Birders (ILYB) can be so important.

"There were a lot of young birders in Illinois, and they never would have really been able to connect," said founding member Nathan Goldberg, age 16. "These are people who had to teach themselves, and now they can share pictures and have people correct their ID's."

ILYB is a club geared for child, teen and young adult birders. "We may not all be able to drive, but we can still have fun birding!" exclaims the website at <http://illinoisyoungbirders.org>. The Club offers a variety of activities including field trips, a newsletter and a place to post bird lists. While adults lead the field trips, older club members often assist the younger.

"It's almost as if we're an adult for a day showing 6, 7 or 8 year olds our passion," said Goldberg.

Club members produce and contribute to The Hoot, the Club's newsletter. Goldberg's articles include the Sandwich Tern chase of 2010, an interview with birder John Purcell of Lincoln Park and an article on his recent trip to the Cascades with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. Young birders can also post their questions, experiences and sightings on the ILYB blog.

But one of ILYB's main benefits is the opportunity for young birders to connect with others like themselves.

"It's really fun to socialize with kids my age and younger and to share my passion and the knowledge that I have soaked up like a sponge," said Goldberg. "Now, I want to essentially squeeze that knowledge from the sponge over all of them."



Former ENSBC club member Brian Herriot organized ILYB in 2009 after hearing about similar clubs in other states. (Herriot later moved to Ohio.) ILYB's goal is to keep young birders engaged, said Josh Engel, one of the club's current leaders.

"We wanted a way to encourage kids who had an interest in birding to keep them interested in birding. A lot of kids dabble in this and that and then leave birding behind. One way to keep them interested is to get them involved with people their age as well as with adults. I had a lot of adults who were really encouraging and helpful when I was a young birder. It made a big difference in keeping me going, and young birders were influential as well," said Engel.

ILYB members enjoy field trip to Fox River. Photo by Eric Gyllenhaal

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## YOUNG BIRDERS CONTINUED FROM COVER

ILYB also allows members to explore birding careers. As a research assistant at the Field Museum, Engel has helped some members obtain internships. (Engel also works as a guide for Tropical Birding and has given programs for ENSBC about his research and trips.)

ILYB members mainly come from around Chicago, "because it's where most of the people are and it's where you can get people to lead field trips," said Engel.

ILYB is working to expand its downstate membership and is seeking adults to lead field trips. A recent combined ILYB-Illinois Ornithological Society trip took young birders to Lake Carlyle in southern Illinois for Sabine's Gulls. Another goal is to coordinate

some joint activities with neighboring states.

And ILYB wants to recruit more girls in the otherwise male-dominated club.

"We're trying to recruit through some teachers. We have a new adult supporting member who's a woman who said she'd love to find more girls to participate," said Engel.



*Photo by Eric Gyllenhaal*

## CONSERVATION COLUMN:

# SAVING THE BIRDS OF MIDWAY ATOLL By Lloyd Davidson

The Midway Atoll, which is part of the Hawaiian-Aleutian volcanic range, has belonged to the U.S. since it was discovered in 1859. The atoll served as a major American naval depot during WWII and then as a Naval Air Station until 1978, when it was downgraded to a Naval Air Facility and finally closed in 1993.

At its peak, this atoll, which has no indigenous human population, was home to 3,500 naval personnel and when they exited the buildings they lived in were left behind. Unfortunately, the paint used on these buildings was largely lead based, and as this paint deteriorated and chipped off, it heavily contaminated the island's soil. Since Midway, in spite of its small size (about 2000 acres total), supports 17 native species of birds, numbering nearly three million

individuals, which include 70% of the world's Laysan Albatross and 37% of the global population of Black-footed Albatross, this has led to serious problems from avian lead poisoning that weakens and kills the chicks born in this polluted environment. In addition, this whole atoll complex receives a great deal of plastic and other debris from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Nearly all of the Laysan Albatross on Midway have been found with plastic in their digestive system and about 1/3 of their chicks die from this.

In addition to the exposed portions of this atoll system, there are about 300,000 acres of lagoon and surrounding waters that support over 250 different species of marine life. These species include the critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals that raise their pups on the beaches. Monk seals are bottom-feeding foragers that rely on the Midway Atoll's reef fish, squid, octopus and crustaceans. Green sea turtles, another threatened species, occasionally nest on the island and a resident pod of 300 spinner dolphins live in the lagoons and near shore waters.

While little can be done to counteract the effects of the garbage contamination, at least the lead poisoning can be effectively dealt with. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has now finally launched a lead eradication program that consists of removing all lead contaminated soil and scraping off and removing the remaining lead paint from the buildings. The buildings are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, so they can't be removed entirely. The lead paint removal will cost approximately \$7 million, will begin next year and will be completed by 2017.



*Laysan Albatross. Photo by Richard Paulson*



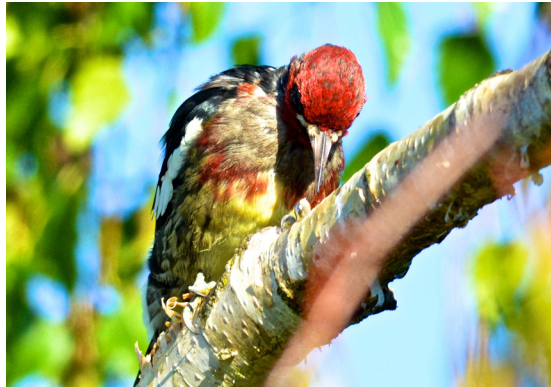
# HIGHLIGHTS FOR SEPTEMBER MIGRATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

By Richard Paulson

I was fortunate enough to go on a small birding trip to Washington and British Columbia in September. I had high hopes of adding approximately 15 new bird species to my North American list including Bar-tailed Godwit, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pacific Golden Plover, all of which eluded us. However, I did add 18 new birds for North America and 16 new lifers.

The highlight of the trip was an all day private charter boat we took out of the harbor at Westport, Washington. The boat went 35 miles off shore to a deep water area known as The Canyon. It was a glorious sunny day with light winds. I was able to use my camera. We had 3 expert spotters plus our expert guide. I positioned myself on the port bow standing next to the lead spotter. For over 2 hours I was the only tour member in the bow as we headed way out. About an hour out he pointed out my first Pomarine Jaeger and with the thrill I felt, I knew the trip would be a success.

Then the cry went up, "Skua!" It was way out and sitting on the water, but immediately the South Polar Skua took to the air and up came my camera! I stayed glued to the port bow and my spotter as he found a Parasitic Jaeger. We were busy shouting out the birds for those in the smoother-riding stern. When we got to the deep water we moved in on



*Red-breasted Sapsucker (Young male in first molt).*



*Black-footed Albatross.*



*Sabine's Gull.*



*Northern Fulmar.*



*Tufted Puffin.*

a drifting net fishing boat. There were hundreds of birds on the water and many more in the air.

The spotter near me found a Flesh-footed Shearwater. I got a good look before many Pink-footed Shearwaters, Northern Fulmers, Forked-tailed Storm Petrels and gulls took to the air with Black-footed Albatross wheeling around gracefully. The Flesh-footed was lost, not to be seen again. Then another call came out: "At one o'clock, four hundred yards out about 20 degrees above the horizon, we have a Laysan Albatross coming in!" It is remarkable what an incredibly beautiful and graceful bird it was!

Then near the boat, up popped a Tufted Puffin one of my "wish list" birds. I had a few seconds to photograph before it dove again and the boat moved away.

As in any birding trip you don't find all of the target birds you hope for. Many times Bar-tailed Godwits will join the large flocks of Marbled Godwits. We must have checked over large daytime roosts of 1000 Marbled Godwits for the elusive Bar-tailed to no avail. We also missed Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pacific Golden Plover.

The trip, however, topped my expectations, and I have at least three reasons left to go back and try again!

*All photos by Richard Paulson*



*Ruff (young female.)*

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Yes, the annual winter census of the birds does matter! It provides critical information for scientists to protect species and habitat. Contact the compiler for any count you wish to join.

### DECEMBER 16, 2012 – SUNDAY

47th Chicago Urban Count. Compiler: Jeffrey Sanders, 847-657-6431.

### DECEMBER 25, 2012 – TUESDAY:

Chicago Lakefront Christmas Count. Compiler: Joel Greenberg, 630-725-9416.

### DECEMBER 29, 2012 – SATURDAY

52nd Chicago-North Shore Christmas Count. Compiler: Tim Wallace, 847-548-2654. Feeder Count Compiler: Call Eleonora di Liscia 847-568-0160 or email [diliscialaw@comcast.net](mailto:diliscialaw@comcast.net) for a count form and to make sure you are in the count circle. Join us for a potluck following the Count at sundown at Libby Hill's, 2715 Woodland Rd., Evanston, IL. 847-457-2096.

### JANUARY 1, 2013 – TUESDAY

Waukegan Christmas Count. Compiler: Joel Greenberg, 630-725-9416.

## PROGRAM NIGHTS

All programs are held on the fourth Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at the Evanston Ecology Center, 2024 McCormick Blvd., Evanston, IL. Free admission, parking and refreshments. For more details on programs, check our website at [www.ensbc.org](http://www.ensbc.org).

### NOVEMBER 27, 2012:

"Dragonflies & Damselflies of Chicagoland: A Macro-Photographic Journey through the Life History of Odonates." Marla Garrison, Biology Faculty at McHenry County College and author of *Damselflies of Chicagoland: A Photo Field Guide* (published online by the Field Museum of Natural History), offers an image-intensive, up-close and personal, presentation of this intriguing, and visually splendid, group of insects.

### JANUARY 22, 2013

"South Africa." South Africa has a well-deserved reputation as a fantastic vacation destination for those who want beautiful landscapes, world-class food and wine, excellent infrastructure, and lots of charismatic megafauna. Josh Engel, who spent over three years based in Cape Town working as a birding and safari guide, will take us on a virtual tour of South Africa.

## FIELD TRIPS

### NOVEMBER 18, SUNDAY

Jeff Sanders' 43rd Annual Fall Specialty Trip! North Shore Lakefront. Includes Northwestern, Gillson Park, Maple Park, Tower Road Park, Park Ave., Rose Beach in Highland Park, and other areas as time permits. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Northwestern University beach. Go east on Lincoln St. from Sheridan Rd., turn south past the giant fitness center, then turn east (left) and go almost to the end. Bring scopes and dress for cold lake wind. Leader: Jeff Sanders.

### FEBRUARY, 2013, SATURDAY, DATE TBA

12th Annual Gull Frolic at Winthrop Harbor 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Winthrop Harbor Yacht Club at the end of 7th Street near Skipper buds. PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AND LIMITED TO THE FIRST 150 PEOPLE. Sponsor: Illinois Ornithological Society. Contact IOS to get on the waiting list at <http://www.illinoisbirds.org> as information becomes available.

## FACES OF EVANSTON

ENSBC'S own Conservation Chair, Lloyd Davidson, was awarded four Honorable Mentions in the Kiwanis Club's Faces of Evanston competition. All photos must be taken in Evanston. Above is "Fourth of July," one of Lloyd's winning photos.

