

# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

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Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

## A PLEA FOR THE NATIVES

By Eleonora di Liscia

Charlotte Adelman had always loved nature and gardening. But it wasn't until she saw a goldfinch in her yard that she had the epiphany which led to her new book: *The Midwestern Native Garden – Native Alternatives to Nonnative Flowers and Plants, an Illustrated Guide*.

"First, we planted our backyard for birds, thinking birds eat fruit. Then I had this epiphany as I saw a Goldfinch sitting on a Purple Coneflower. I realized birds eat native seed, not just bird seed. So then I thought in terms of planting the native plants that would provide seeds. Up to then, we'd had a lot of Peonies and Day Lilies," said Adelman.

Adelman sought help from the Chicago Botanic Garden, and with the assistance

of David Sollenberger, the Garden's prairie expert, she converted her 12,500-square foot yard into a native prairie.

Charlotte then began writing a book about prairies with coauthor husband, Bernard L. Schwartz. Charlotte and Bernie worked as attorneys until retiring in 1992. The kind of marriage you hope you can have after 40 years, the couple have collaborated on this virtual second career. Charlotte had intended to include a prairie directory as a chapter in the book. This



idea expanded into the Prairie Directory of North America, which to this day is the only comprehensive North American prairie directory. Bernie then founded his publishing company, Lawndale Enterprises, named after their street, in order to put out their book.

"Charlotte had the great idea we should do a second edition. She had all kinds of problems with agents, so on her own, she found a

publisher, Oxford University Press. At the same time, Charlotte had the idea to do the Midwest Prairie book, so she again wrote many letters, and she found Ohio University Press to do the book," explained Bernie.

The book idea grew as a natural extension of Charlotte's interest in native plants. She found herself having the same conversations time and again:

"The genesis of this book is people would say, 'I love my Japanese irises. I can't give them up.' And I would say, 'If you really love your Japanese Irises, you might consider planting any one of a number of native mid-west irises that look exactly the same and have the same cultivation requirements. So why not plant something native?'"

Charlotte eventually made a list of popular nonnative plants and their native alternatives. When Wilmette's Highcrest Middle School created a native prairie, Charlotte was called for suggestions.

"Then I started thinking it was time for me to do something rather than being the local go-to person," she said.

Bernie contributed by locating sources for the book's illustrations as well as taking many of the book's photos.

While intended as a practical guide to Midwest gardening, the book has a mission. Charlotte and Bernie strongly believe that the decisions people make in their gardens and public landscapes affect the future of the Midwest's natural



Charlotte Adelman & Bernard Schwartz in their prairie by Tim Wallace  
Inset photo of their book, "The Midwestern Native Garden"

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## THE NATIVES CONTINUED FROM COVER



diversity. To further their mission, Charlotte even approached the Wilmette Park District to let her create a wetland prairie in its detention basin at Crawford and Wilmette Avenues. (For more information, see <http://www.wilmettepark.org/CENTENNIAL-PARK>.)

As Adelman says, non-native, invasive species are taking up room that could go to native plants, many of which are going extinct. And, if people want to have butterflies and birds, they need to foster the plants these animals rely on.

"Think of the milkweed. It's the only plant that Monarchs lay eggs on. Monarchs are the Illinois State Insect, and everyone loves them, but they do not put together their gardening practices with the butterflies' survival. So if people want certain things, they have to plant the host plants that butterflies lay their eggs on," said Adelman.

(The Midwest Native Garden is available at [www.ohioswallow.com](http://www.ohioswallow.com) or through Amazon. The book will also be available in stores and at the Chicago Botanic Garden gift shop.)



(Above) Centennial Prairie's Fall Plants, (Below: Left) Monarch Caterpillar on Milkweed, (Right) Buckeye Butterfly on Asters

Photos by Tim Wallace

# JUNCO ANGST

By Eleonora di Liscia

One crisp winter morning, I was filling the backyard feeders when I spotted a Dark-eyed Junco perched on a branch above the platform feeder. He seemed lost in thought, and as I approached, he became startled and hopped into the air.

"Oh, it's only you," he said, alighting on a tree branch.

"Yes, only me," I replied. "The one who fills the feeders every day so you can eat without scrounging around in the fields and starving to death in the winter. That's the one."

"Well, you don't have to get huffy," he said. "I was just thinking. . ."

I supposed I had become a little sensitive about always getting the short end of these bird-human exchanges. Perhaps I'd jumped the gun. "I'm sorry," I apologized. "I guess you do seem a little down. Can I help?"

"It's just that. . . I don't know who I am anymore. I mean, am I species? Am I subspecies? I used to know. I was a Slate-colored Junco, and those other birds were other kinds of juncos. But now, we all seem to be lumped together. We're all Dark-eyed Juncos no matter what we look like. What does it mean?"

"I wish I could tell you. But I feel your pain. It doesn't seem quite right. If I see an Oregon Junco and White-winged in the same year, is that two ticks on my year list or only one?"

"Exactly," he said. "Am I a full tick or only half a tick?"

"Oh, a full tick, certainly," I reassured.

"And this whole thing makes dating seem so, well, complicated. If I see a little Oregon Junco and she's a honey, can I bring her home to mother? Will we make beautiful babies? Will our babies have babies?"

"I suppose if you met a little honey who happened to be an Oregon Junco, you could always give it a whirl."

"No, that would never do from an evolutionary standpoint. I have to be sure that my genes will be passed on to succeeding generations and if I mate with another species, our babies might not have babies. I have to fulfill my biological imperative, my manifest destiny as it were."

"I never quite thought of that. I supposed that could be counterproductive," I mused.

"Yes, you see my dilemma."

"Indeed. But think about it. In all probability, you'll meet another Slate-colored Junco and the whole issue will never come up, right?"

"You may have a point," he admitted.

"Why I can think of at least half a dozen perfectly eligible female Slate-colored Juncos that I could probably hook you up with right out of this yard," I offered generously.

"YOU hook ME up? Oh, please. I can do fine on my own. Thanks but no thanks."

And with that he flew off. I could hear him muttering, "Gawd! With her taste, I'd be better off in the talons of a Red-tailed. . ."

I told you I always get the short-end of these bird-human exchanges.

# A PASSION AND AN AVOCATION: DAVID B. JOHNSON

By Eleonora di Liscia

Anyone who has taken one of David B. Johnson's birding trips can testify to the almost childlike joy Dave takes in seeing the birds and making sure you see them too. A prominent field trip leader for ENSBC, Dave takes pleasure in all aspects of birding and has made his contribution to all aspects as well from leading trips to conservation studies.

Always interested in nature, Dave remembers hearing his first bird song outside his Evansville, Indiana boyhood home when his father pointed out the call of the Bobwhite. Later at a boy scout camp: "I remember the scout leader describing the song of the American Bittern, and I thought he was nuts. I asked my mother to send me bird tapes and sure enough he was right," Dave said.

His interest took flight, so to speak, in 1972, when his French instructor and husband, Penny and Tom Pucelik, took him to Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge.

"They were pointing out birds left and right. I remember seeing a Shoveler that Penny said looked like a duck with mud slapped against his sides," Dave said.

From there, Dave served as nature director for Boy Scouts of America summer camps in Muskegon, MI and Antigo, WI. In Wisconsin, Dave had a nesting Blackburnian Warbler right next to his nature lodge "that would sing every time I came to work. I eventually did a birding list there (Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan Scout Reservation), and I saw that American Bittern face to face."

In 1974, Dave joined the Bird Club during a Skokie Lagoons trip led by Pat and Jim Ware. Eventually, he became Field Trip Chair and led his own trips including his first as a leader outside Illinois to Minnesota and the Dakotas. On that trip, his group found the first Minnesota record in a century of a McCown's Longspur. Later trips included Mexico and Costa Rica. Dave led a popular series to Duluth, Minnesota during the record winter 2004/2005 owl invasion. His longest running ENSBC trip, the Looney Trip, has been offered for 23 years.

Mike Trahan has been on five of Dave's out of state trips.

"Besides being knowledgeable, Dave is the most



Dave Johnson in Duluth cum Gray Jays Photo by Duane Heaton

easy-going, nice and helpful leader you could find. That's stood him in good stead in working with Type A types like myself, along with those who need more guidance and hand-holding to find the birds. It's been fun watching him learn too. The ladies on the trips soon trained him on the importance of rolls, fruit, etc. at the 5:30 a.m. breakfasts as well as the importance of regular pit stops," Mike said.

Dave's day job has been in computers as a systems developer for 32 years. Even this training has played into his avocation as it allows him to interpret the statistical analysis and data spread sheets necessary as former Compiler of the Evanston North Shore Bird Count, Lake County Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator and Editor of the Illinois Christmas Bird Count for the NAS American Birds.

Although not a professional ornithologist, Dave learned scientific methodology from his mentor Dr. Laurence C. Binford. As a result, Dave has reviewed records of bird sightings and written articles for ornithological publications such as *Birding and Meadowlark*. He has performed bird surveys including at the Des Plaines Wetlands, Somme Woods and Fort Sheridan. He contributed to many state bird checklist committees, such as for Illinois and Illinois Beach State Park.

"I like the conservation aspect of birding. Data collecting for conservation is very important. It's the objective part of birding," he said.

His work on birding projects led to his authoring the book "Birds of Chicago," a great beginning guide for local birds, published by Lone Pine Press.

Currently, Dave enjoys county listing as a way of getting to parts of the state where he has never been.

"I'll pick a county like Du Page and pick an area I've never been to. I enjoy the hiking as much as I like the birding. I like not knowing what's around the corner," he said. "I just like the escape of the whole thing. It's just a way for me to clear my head."

Some of Dave's most bizarre bird encounters include the Northern Gannet that flew over his car at a Vernon Hills shopping mall and the Ivory Gull perched on a Wisconsin fishing shack.

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*Great Gray Owl! Photo by Duane Heaton*

# SIGN UP FOR BIRD CONSERVATION ISSUES NOTIFICATION!!

*Contributed by Suzanne Checchia,  
ENSBC BCN representative*

As a member organization of the Bird Conservation Network coalition, ENSBC is asked to bring issues of importance to the attention of its members. Often these issues are time-sensitive, but because Bird Calls is published only 6 times a year, there has been no good way to reach our members in a timely way. Until now!

We're starting an email notification list to alert interested ENSBC members to bird conservation issues in time to act on them. If you would like to be on this list, please send an email to [smchecchia@aol.com](mailto:smchecchia@aol.com) to let me know. Items may include upcoming public meetings, comment periods or votes on policy affecting bird conservation and habitat management as well as announcements of special bird conservation conferences, workshops, training opportunities and blitzes.

Our calls and letters have helped to turn around important conservation issues in the past, and we have learned when your voice will be important and when it will just be another drop in a very big bucket. I will send out important notices, and promise not to fill your mailboxes unnecessarily. The list will be restricted to this use only and will not be shared with any other organizations. Focus will be primarily local and regional, but occasionally may be national in scope.

For more information on the work that BCN does, visit [www.bcnbirds.org](http://www.bcnbirds.org).

## C A L E N D A R 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.

**October 25** – “The Galapagos: Exploring Darwin’s Tapestry”: The Galapagos archipelago is a forbidding place, even though romantics tend to imbue it with the rosy glow of a Pacific Eden. John Hess, Emeritus Professor of Biology at the University of Central Missouri, is also a photographer who has worked at the interface of art and science throughout his career. In 2009, he published a book of the same title through the University of Missouri Press. In this presentation, he will talk about how the Galapagos works – why it is the way it is, and how the lives of some of the “Galapagos Royalty” are woven into the tapestry of life.

**November 22** – “Project Squirrel” – Steve Sullivan is Curator of Urban Ecology at the Chicago Academy of Sciences where he studies the animals in your back yard as well as working with the institution’s century-and-a-half old specimens and doing the taxidermy to make new ones. Steve is also the director of Project Squirrel, a citizen-science project that

involves people of all ages in the study of tree squirrels as a way to understand ecological processes in the urban game park. Additionally, the Project studies the most influential species in the urban ecosystem – humans – and how their involvement with the outdoors influences their attitudes and knowledge about nature. This presentation will discuss why squirrels are worth watching and will hopefully inspire the audience and their friends to become involved in watching and submitting data about the squirrels that occur (or not) in their neighborhoods.

## FIELD TRIPS

**November 20, 2011 - Sunday – Jeff Sanders’ Fall Specialty Trip!** North Shore Lakefront 42nd Annual Jeff Sanders’ Fall Specialty Trip! North Shore lakefront – 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.



## A PASSION AND A AVOCATION: DAVID B. JOHNSON CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

As with many birders, Dave’s family does not always share his passion. He often feels guilty about the time birding takes away from them.

“My wife has put up with a lot, my abandoning her to chase a rarity. I do love chasing rarities. I suppose it’s the thrill of the hunt, and it also gets you out into areas you just don’t go to,” he said.

One of his more bizarre bird stories involves a family trip to Marquette, Michigan where on the return trip home he spotted an injured Boreal Owl on the shoulder of the highway.

“We were going down the road at 55 mph, and my wife and

son were hoping and praying I didn’t see that owl. I did! Then – a U-ey – I had to empty out the dog food container, and I put the Owl in there. They wouldn’t hold the tin, so I had to hold it while driving until I could get it to a game warden,” he said. Dave stated he did not learn the final fate of that Boreal Owl but presumed it got rehabilitated.

Dave’s next first time ENSBC trip will be to Churchill, Manitoba next summer a near arctic birding destination on Hudson Bay he’s always dreamed of going to. He will also be repeating the successful Albuquerque, NM Rosy-finch trip in February 2012.