

SPRINGFIELD AUDUBON SOCIETY

FALL 2018

President's Report

After the summer break the Springfield Audubon Society is ready to resume activities for 2018-19. Several programs have already been scheduled. We will have a bird walk at Adams on September 15 from 8-9:30 AM. Matt Hayes will lead the hike. Our first third Thursday Meeting and Program will be held on September 20. Tony Rothering from Lincoln Land will be the presenter. He will lead a bird hike through Adams Wildlife Sanctuary at 6PM followed by a program on bird banding at 7PM in Jochens Hall. The Raptor Center will do Programs from its Raptor Focus Series on February 21 and March 21. We are also hosting the popular Owl Prowl on October 26th at 6 PM. Volunteers are needed for this event. Please check out our website at Springfield.audubon.org for more details.

The Springfield Audubon Society will be supporting Bird ID classes for student after school groups at Dubois and St. Patrick's Schools again this year. Two sessions are planned.

Please take some time to check out the Adams Wildlife Sanctuary. Many improvements have been made this summer. The trails have been widened, trees and shrubs have been planted, over half the trails have been mulched and the landscaping around the house has been improved. The bird feeders around the house are very popular and are easy to access. Wild Birds Unlimited continues to provide the feeders and food for this feature. You can also try out the two neat benches built by the volunteers from a large tree trunk. I would like to thank the volunteer stewards, many of them being Friends of Sangamon Valley Members, at Adams for their efforts during the summer often in very hot conditions. I would also like to thank Grace Norris for her work on the new website. She has spent countless hours working on this site. Check it out.

Please consider a donation to the Illinois Audubon Society Appeal for Stewardship Funds. Adams is in great need of an ATV to assist in stewardship at Adams. Funds from a donation to this Appeal would be used to purchase this piece of equipment.

I hope that you will be able to join us for many of the activities we have planned for Springfield Audubon Society Members. We are in need of volunteers to do many of the things that make Springfield Audubon Society a viable and successful organization. A list of some of the needs will be posted soon on the website. One of the immediate needs is for volunteers to provide refreshments for our third Thursday Meetings starting with September. If you have any questions please feel to contact me at 899-6150 or mike@holinga.org.

Sangamon County Spring Bird Count

In early May , 13 birders participated in the Spring Bird Count which is held annually in all 102 Illinois counties. This statewide count was initiated by Vern Kleen in the 1970's. The species count for Sangamon County was 161 species. This is the largest number of species in recent years. The stars of this year's Sangamon County count were three Whooping Cranes found by Chris Young in a temporary wetland south of Loami.

Audubon meeting May, 2018

“The Hawk of All Trades”, Jacques Nuzzo and Jane Seitz, May 17, 2018

Jacques began the program with a brief review of the biology of the Red-tailed Hawk (RTH). RTH are very, very common, and there isn't a place that one can go and not find one. They are one of the most versatile of the raptors in the world, a hawk of all trades. RTHs are generalists, occupying a wide range of habitats and hunting a wide range of prey. They hunt and eat a tremendous variety of mammals, reptiles, insects, and birds, and they are even proficient at hunting and killing rattlesnakes. RTHs are not dichromatic (males and females are not distinguishable by color patterns). Indeed, RTH are very frequently mis-identified, as there can be great color variation between individuals. No other hawk has so many color variations

The breeding season for RTHs is February through June. These birds are monogamous unless they are separated by the death of one of the pair, and pairs cling to established nesting territories for years. Nests are usually in the crotch of a tree, sometimes on cliffs, sometimes on building ledges. One to five eggs are laid, with two to three eggs being most common. The young hatch in 28 – 30 days and the young fledge at 42 – 46 days. There is usually one brood per year.

Jacques then brought us up-to-date on Decatur's downtown Red-tailed Hawks. In late winter, Jacques was downtown when he noticed a RTH carrying a stick. He watched as it landed on the Barnes Citizen's building in Decatur and was excited to see that a pair of the hawks was building a nest on the fire escape of this tallest building in downtown Decatur. It was a fortuitous circumstance that the WAND weather cam was mounted on the top of this very building, and Jacques was able to get the camera redirected to the nest. WAND broadcast the story of Han and Leia and they developed quite a following. The first egg was laid March 14. Unfortunately, no more eggs followed. The usual clutch for RTHs is 1-5 eggs. The fact that this pair laid only one egg was worrisome.

Leia soon began sitting, but she was repeatedly scared away from her nest by various human disturbances. A work crew spent an entire day working on the top of her building, and she was flushed from her nest for seven hours. On April 9, a snowfall blanketed the area, but Leia sat tight. She was always a very attentive parent to her egg. Despite the hopes of many, the egg didn't hatch. Will they return? Hopefully. Not surprisingly, a pair is more likely to return to a nesting site if the previous efforts were successful.

Jane then brought out Solo, one of Illinois raptor Center's (IRC) resident RTHs. She is an absolutely gorgeous bird. Solo has been a long-time resident of IRC and she has laid eggs most springs. She has always laid these eggs on the floor – sometimes dropping them from where she was sitting on a perch – and has never shown any interest in her eggs. This year, Jane and Jacques were surprised when Solo began sitting on her egg. Jacques made a nest for her in a basket lined with straw and pine needles, and she accepted the nest and continued setting on her unfertilized, non-viable egg. Jacques was hoping to have RTH eggs or chicks this spring for her to foster, but that has not been the case.

As always, Jacques Nuzzo and Jane Seitz gave a most interesting presentation to our organization.

Nicholas Primm

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Mississippi Kite

Springfield Audubon calendars are available. You can pick one up at the fall programs. Five dollar donation is suggested.

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