

# IN FLIGHT

The Official Newsletter of McHenry County Audubon  
Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society



## A Note From the Editor

**LISA MAIER**

You may notice that this newsletter looks a bit different than the newsletters of the past several years. That is because the current software we use to create the newsletter will soon be discontinued, so we are trying out something new! This is a work in progress and will likely continue to change as we learn this new program or try out others.

We'd love to hear what you think about the new layout and design, please send your comments to

[MCAinflight@gmail.com](mailto:MCAinflight@gmail.com)

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*Featuring local recent sightings and member photos throughout.*

**Cover Photo:**  
**Hooded Mergansers by Casey Warnecke**

# Annual Meeting

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH AT 5:30PM  
RIDGEFIELD-CRYSTAL LAKE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



## McHenry County Audubon Annual Meeting



Wings and Talons with Live Ambassador Raptors

Presents

### “Winged Stewards—Why Raptors Matter to Our Ecosystem”

- Social Time
  - 5:30 - 6:00 pm
- Pot luck and Announcements
  - 6:00 - 6:45 pm
- Presentation
  - 6:45 - 8:00 pm
- Social Time and Clean-up
  - 8:00 - 8:45 pm

Come Join us to see our Owls, Hawks and Falcons up close! You will learn fascinating facts about them and explore the various issues they face. We will explore the vital connections between birds of prey and habitat. We will also learn steps we can take to be responsible stewards of the shared space we live in.

WINGS and TALONS is a non-profit organization that cares for raptors that can be found in our habitat. They provide educational programs with a focus on conservation. They are 100% operated by volunteers who donate their time 365 days a year to care for their ambassador birds.

#### LOCATION

Non-members, guests &  
newcomers always welcome!

Ridgefield-Crystal Lake  
Presbyterian Church  
8505 Church St, Crystal Lake

McHenryAudubon.org  
MCAudubon@gmail.com

Don't miss out on our Annual Meeting, now the third Saturday  
of September!

Bring a dish to share and don't forget to bring your own plate  
and flatware.

*Let us know you are coming! RSVP to MCAudubon@gmail.com*

# Upcoming Events

## The Big Sit(s)!

We have TWO big sits this fall season! Join us for one or both!

We need volunteers to represent MCA for two-hour shifts at both sits. NO experience required! Just sit, spot birds, and have fun! Let us know if you want to help at [MCAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:MCAudubon@gmail.com)

## IAS Chapter Big Sit

*Sunday, September 28<sup>th</sup> at McHenry Dam*  
Join team **Big-crowned Titlets** and help us find as many species as possible from a single location in a friendly competition with our fellow IAS chapters.

## The Big Sit

*Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at Lost Valley Visitor Center in Glacial Park*

Our annual big sit with our friends The Friends of Hackmatack NWR, McHenry County Conservation District, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and Fish and Wildlife Service!

## Weekend Bird Walks

Join us for one of our regularly scheduled walks in partnership with IDNR. Please let us know you are coming!

Email [DNR.Volobog@illinois.gov](mailto:DNR.Volobog@illinois.gov) to register.

- **Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 7am at Chain 'O Lakes State Park** - Meet at the Badger parking lot, at the start of the Goldfinch Trail.
- **Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 7am at McHenry Dam State Park**
- **Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 8am at Moraine Hills State Park** - Meet at the Whitetail Prairie parking lot.
- **Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8am at McHenry Dam State Park**
- **Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 8am at Volo Bog State Natural Area**
- **Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 8am at McHenry Dam State Park**
- **Sunday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 8am at Volo Bog State Natural Area**

## Member Exclusive Walk at Tamarack Farms

**Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup>  
at 8am**

Tamarack Farms is one of the latest additions to the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and is in the heart of the refuge. It is also one of the largest at nearly 1,000 acres. The purchase of this high quality site was made possible by Illinois Audubon Society and was a coordinated effort with The Conservation Foundation, Openlands, and the USFWS. This site is not currently open to the public, but MCA has been granted access for a member exclusive walk!

**You must RSVP to attend.** Register with [MCAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:MCAudubon@gmail.com).

# Working with Our Friends at IDNR to Create Habitat for Birds

LISA MAIER

McHenry County Audubon works with various organizations on various projects to help birds survive and thrive throughout McHenry County and Illinois.

This fall, MCA has been coordinating with Melissa Grycan (IDNR Biologist) and staff to lower water levels in one of the marshes at McHenry Dam in order to create habitat for migrating shorebirds. It has been very successful, attracting over a dozen shorebird species, including a rare Red-necked Phalarope. It has also attracted wading birds like Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Least Bittern. Large groups of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, sometimes over 100 at a time, have also enjoyed access to the newly available food sources in the drained marsh.

Unfortunately, the weather doesn't always cooperate and the rainfall from recent storms has caused the Fox River to rise, resulting in water levels rising in the marsh as well. They should start dropping again soon and the birds should return.

Shorebirds rely heavily on these emergent mudflats and shallow 'fluddles' during migration to rest and feed to fuel their incredibly long migrations. Very little shorebird habitat exists in McHenry County; McHenry Dam, with its already built-in controls for flood mitigation and Fox River water level management makes this site uniquely apt to create habitat for the birds who need it most at the time they need it most.

A very special thanks to Melissa and IDNR staff for participating in this effort!



Here's a picture of the bluebirds at my bird bath; the one bird has water spraying from him shaking his head. I live on a farm and have a great backyard area with many different birds coming to my feeders.  
Gayle Hubert



The Great Blue Heron rookery at Rutland Forest Preserve had 38 nests when I last counted at the end of March. I'm hoping none of them have come down in the terrible storms we have had recently.  
Karen Makowski



## A Walk with Alice

Lisa Maier

As I walked down one of the wooded trails at Pioneer Tree Farm, enjoying the sunny June day, I said aloud "It really is a beautiful day, isn't it, Alice?". I was alone, physically, but in my mind's imagination, Alice Howenstine and I were on a walk together. It was the day of her "Celebration of Life", a truly lovely remembrance of Alice and all the joy she brought to people throughout her life.

I first met the Howenstine's on a McHenry County Audubon Trip to their farm to view the breeding population of Clay-colored Sparrows that resided there. Bill and Alice managed their Christmas Tree Farm in a sustainable way, using organic methods that made it appealing to the sparrows. I fell in love with the farm; Bill and Alice were so generous and knowledgeable, true salt-of-the-earth type people.

There have been many visits to the farm after that; more visits to monitor the Clay-colored Sparrows, owl trips, family trips to get our Christmas Tree...

I grew up when the culture in the US was hyper-competitive with this urgency to achieve an impossible perfection. This environment often pinned women against each other and made them to be rivals and enemies instead of friends and sisters, and made many of us feel alone in our struggles.

In some ways, it has gotten even worse today; the hyper-performative, hyper-consumerism, and hyper-

aesthetic cultures that flood social media seem to outweigh anything of substance. All this combined with the outright war on women's rights, has made it a very scary time for many women. In my opinion, it's a real shame and a detriment to our society when young women don't have good female role models and strong female relationships.

It often blows my mind how many strong, amazing women are in our local birding and conservation community. I have been so fortunate to have been surrounded by many of these incredible women, including Alice. Many of these women are part of McHenry County Audubon and have helped me to become the person I am today. I know I would not have been able to achieve what I have been able to without their example, mentoring, encouragement, wisdom, leadership, and friendship.

I did not know Alice as well as many people but she did leave a huge impression on me. She was kind, generous, intelligent, had a fun sense of humor and a contagious smile. Alice inspires me to be a better person and to be a strong and confident woman. I hope one day I can be even a fraction of the example she was.

As I make it back to my car, I say goodbye to Alice and look forward to our next walk together.

"An Opportunistic Catch"

A Bald Eagle clutching an American Gizzard Shad snatched from a Herring Gull.

Chain 'O Lakes, Johnsburg, IL; May 1, 2025



## Fishing on The Chain

A Visual Essay by Ann C. Tomaino Triner



"Fishing On The Dock of the Bay"

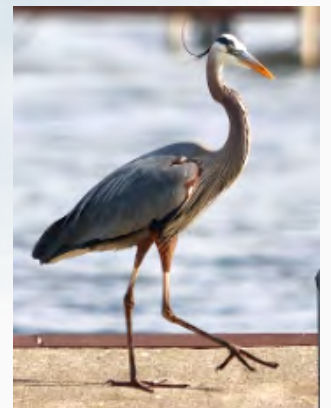
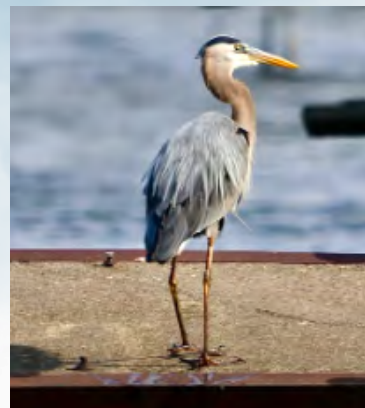
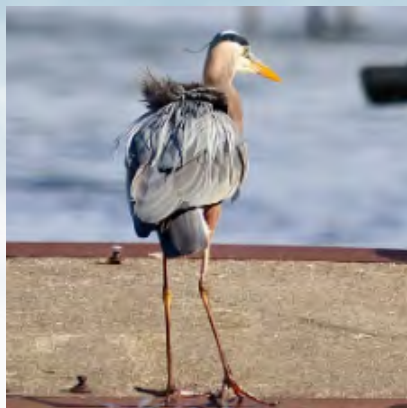
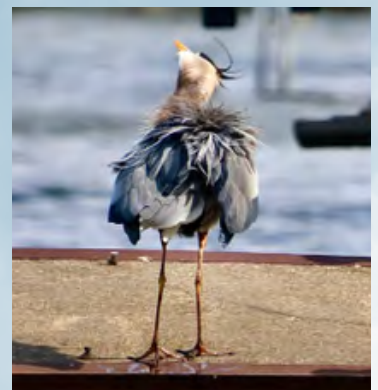
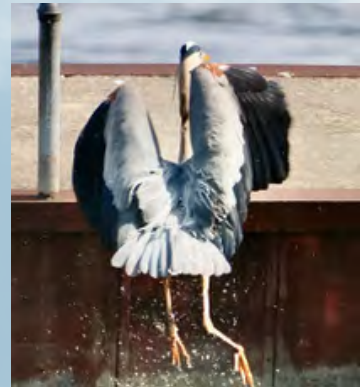
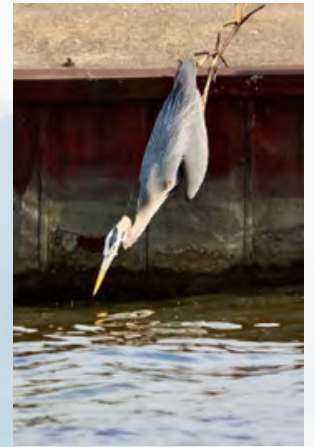
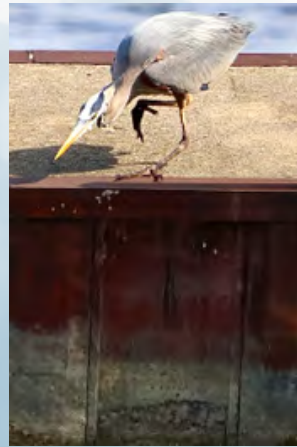
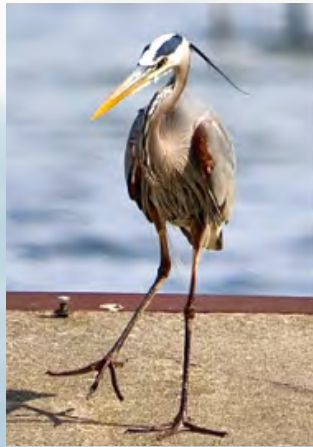
A Red-tailed Hawk investigating the carcass of a catfish.

Chain 'O Lakes; Johnsburg, IL; April 24, 2025



"Diligence On Display"

A Great Blue Heron patiently hunting for fish.  
Chain 'O Lakes, Johnsburg, IL; May 14, 2025





## Book Review: *The Falcon Thief* by Joshua Hammer

Mark Perry

Well researched non-fiction, these pages flutter by like a John Grisham novel.

The villain star, Jeffrey Lendrum, steals rare and endangered raptor eggs, Peregrine Falcons, Gyrfalcons, African Black Eagles, and many more. He traffics the eggs, taped to his body, in cartons, and in incubators, through international airports, to sell to wealthy sheiks in the United Arab Emirates. Ancient Arab falconry is in a renaissance, with worldwide hunting fueled with limitless funds, and new sports like racing, drive an unquenchable thirst for raptors.

Tuck your wings and dive into a criminal underworld of wildlife smuggling, swoop into the hatchling wildlife legal protections, and fledgling law enforcement. It reads like a fast-paced thriller, moving between different global locations; Patagonia, Scotland, South Africa, Wales, and the Canadian Arctic. The stakes are high, literally, as Lendrum rappels down cliffs, and from helicopters to steal falcon clutches.

Hammer dives into Lendrum's motives. A rare wild white Gyrfalcon is believed to outperform the more common gray and dull brown birds. They fetch hundreds of thousands of dollars! But Lendrum is driven by compulsion even more than greed, even after multiple convictions, he can't stop robbing nests. He imprints with the wildlife officers hunting him, and even invites them to join him stealing eggs. Like Grisham, Hammer builds legal plots with the gradual uncovering of evidence, strategy, and legal maneuvering.

Two thumbs up!



My first oriole arrived on May 1st. Since then it's been non-stop. We have gone through TEN jars of jelly already! We have a couple males, females and an immature. They take baths in the birdbath and drink the hummingbird nectar out of the feeder. I love to hear their song in the morning!

Lori Indovino-Valus

## Notes from Darlene

An excerpt shared from  
the notes of our  
founder, Darlene Fiske.



Black-throated Blue Warbler -  
Casey Warnecke

### WARBLERS

-2

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PROTHONOTARY:        | YELLOW. Late April. Formerly rare here, now a known NESTER. 8 SBC Late Apr. Swamps. Nests over water. Named for orange & gray robes of First Notaries. Winters in Mex.-Colombia RINGING song. |
| BLUE-WINGED:         | YELLOW. Mid Apr. 13 SBC. NESTER. Likes scrubby, shrubby woods, edges. Has increased at expense of Golden-Winged. Buzzy song.                                                                  |
| GOLDEN-WINGED:       | WHITE. Late Apr. 8 SBC. Likes <i>overgrown pastures, savannas</i> , thus our landscaping changes favor Blue-wing. INTERESTING HYBRIDIZATION with Blue-winged warbler. Another "buzzer"        |
| PARULA:              | YELLOW. Mid Apr. 6 SBC. WARBLER FAMILY NAMED for this "prototype". Treetops. Likes humid woods, nests in Spanish moss. Breeds SE Can.e. US. Winters=Fla.Mex.                                  |
| CAPE MAY:            | YELLOW. Early May. 11 SBC. Latin name="tiger". Breeds ne US, winters Caribbean                                                                                                                |
| BAY-BREASTED:        | WHITE. Early May. 9 SBC. Travels with Cape May, in similar habitats. Similar songs. Similar breeding, wintering                                                                               |
| BLACK-THROATED BLUE: | WHITE. Early May. 6 SBC. Mid canopy or thickets. Slower moving, lazy song. "pocket handkerchief" good female mark.                                                                            |
| CERULEAN:            | WHITE. Late Apr. 5 SBC. NESTER. Treetops. Winters=Colombia                                                                                                                                    |
| WILSON'S:            | YELLOW. Early May. 3 SBC. These "yellows" come late, stay late. Most are ground lovers. Nest on ground, creep through underbrush. Named for Alexander Wilson, early ornithologist, painter.   |

## McHenry Audubon Board of Directors:

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 Recording Secretary - Amanda Parrish 608-345-3846 amparrish@gmail.com  
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**MCAudubon@gmail.com**

**McHenryAudubon.org**

**IllinoisAudubon.org**

**McHenry County Audubon is a Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society**

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Woodstock, IL 60098

Visit us at [McHenryAudubon.org](http://McHenryAudubon.org)

Email us at [MCAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:MCAudubon@gmail.com)

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Local and Regional Field Trips are held throughout the year!

Weekend Bird Walks at McHenry Dam/ Moraine Hills State Park in McHenry, Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside & Chain-O-Lakes State Park in Spring Grove!

We coordinate both the McHenry County Spring Bird Count and Christmas Bird Count!

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**Members Meetings:**

Dorr Township SOAR Room

1039 Lake Avenue

Woodstock, IL 60098

2nd Thursday of Feb., Mar., Apr., Oct. & Nov.

Refreshments served at 7:00pm, Meeting starts at 7:30pm

**Annual Meeting:**

Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church

8505 Church Street

Ridgefield (Crystal Lake), Illinois 60012

Third Saturday of September at 5:30pm



**McHenry County Audubon Society**

*Environmental Awareness Through Birding*

McHenry County Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 67  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
[www.McHenryAudubon.org](http://www.McHenryAudubon.org)  
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