



SPRINGFIELD AUDUBON SOCIETY

A CHAPTER OF ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

STEWARDS OF ADAMS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



Volunteers from Eck, Schafer & Punk (top) and Hospital Sisters Health System assisted at the sanctuary on two afternoons.



Project Wingspan's Eleanor Schumacher

JUST AS NATURAL HABITATS, BIRDS, AND other species form an interrelated community, so too do the organizations who help each other in a common effort. This fall, SAS stewards received assistance on two separate afternoons from employees of Eck, Schafer & Punke, LLP and the Hospital Sisters Health System. The volunteer groups performed such tasks as processing prairie seeds, collecting trash, cleaning bird feeders, and spreading mulch. In October, the goal of increasing the diversity in the Adams Wildlife Sanctuary prairie was furthered by Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary's Land Manager, Vern LaGessee, who welcomed SAS volunteers to Nipper's premier prairie to collect seeds of select plant species that will later be dispersed at the sanctuary. Thank you to everyone!



Vern LaGessee helps SAS volunteers identify the seeds of select prairie plants at Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary.

SPRINGFIELD AUDUBON SOCIETY and Adams Wildlife Sanctuary likewise did their part to promote the goals of other organizations through collaboration (*Read more on page 4.*) SAS sponsored the ticketed Owl Prowl program, inviting the Illinois Raptor Center and their ambassador owls to the sanctuary. All proceeds from the event were donated to the IRC. Eleanor Schumacher with Project Wingspan also visited the sanctuary to conduct a prairie seed collecting workshop followed by seed collection

in the AWS prairie. The collected seeds in combination with seeds from other donating prairies will be awarded by Project Wingspan to habitat programs in Illinois. **We are all better together!**



Illinois Raptor Center Screech Owl

Springfield Audubon Society works to foster connections between people, birds and natural habitats.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



By Marilyn Robins

The Springfield Audubon Chapter and Adams Wildlife Sanctuary have been busy as usual. In addition to our successful Owl Prowl program, there have been many volunteer days and events. Just to list a few: maintaining trails, attempting a prairie burn (to be rescheduled), collecting prairie seeds, welcoming volunteer groups, providing educational events for local school students, and hosting prairie hikes. We thank all those involved.

Anyone interested in participating in these activities, please contact us. Upcoming events can be found in this newsletter, and we would love to have you here. Our birds need you!

HISTORY

Remembering Our Roots: The Springfield Nature League, 1932-1960

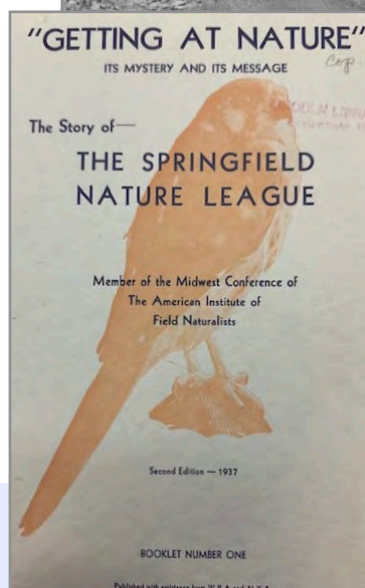
By Susan Allen

Its Purpose: "...To find a larger measure of joy in living through intimate fellowship with nature."

If you have a free afternoon and are interested in Springfield Audubon Society's history, you may want to visit the Lincoln Library's Sangamon Valley Collection, where you will find three banker boxes of documents devoted to SAS, including several files concerning our predecessor, the Springfield Nature League. According to the *State Journal Register*, the League was founded by Reverend George M. Link, with the objective of serving the community by providing nature classes, field trips, study groups, and 'screen tours' in natural history. Although the Nature League operated 90-some years ago, the members' enthusiasm in nature continues today in the hearts of Springfield Audubon Society's members.

AT A GLANCE

- **1932:** Springfield chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society begins as the Springfield Nature League.
- **1960:** Springfield Nature League votes to affiliate with the National Audubon Society and changes its name to the Springfield Audubon Society.
- **1979:** Springfield Audubon Society adopts new by-laws and votes to seek chapter status in the Illinois Audubon Society.



Springfield Nature League, Carpenter Park, circa 1936 (top); Father Link, a Springfield priest active in the Nature League, circa 1940 (bottom). Images from Lincoln Library Sangamon Valley Collection

BIRDING NEWS

Bird Banding Demonstration Held at the Sanctuary

THE LINCOLN LAND ASSOCIATION OF BIRD BANDERS gave people visiting the sanctuary in September the opportunity to consider the lives of individual birds as they weighed, measured, and studied areas beneath the feathers of various species. We could only imagine the migration journey ahead for a Black-throated Green Warbler hatchling (its young age detected by the soft spot on its head) that weighed under ten grams - less than two nickels! In all, forty birds of fifteen species were banded and the information of each recorded. This information was sent to the USGS Bird Banding Lab, which has been collecting data for conservation research since the 1920s. The information from Adams Wildlife Sanctuary will become part of this research. Learn more about bird banding by clicking here: [USGS Bird Banding Lab](#)

Illinois Big Sit Competition

SAS members participated in the Illinois Big Sit Competition for the first time at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary in September. The "Adams Species Spotters" team



remained seated in a "count circle" to watch and listen for birds at the sanctuary, enjoying a day of camaraderie while tallying an impressive number bird species. In all, Illinois Audubon Society registered 41 teams statewide, which included 132 participants who counted a total of 310 hours. The Big Sit Competition helps illustrate the power of quiet observation.

Christmas Bird Count Coming Soon!

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) occurs December 14 to January 5 every season. You are invited to join the CBC hike at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary which will be led by Illinois Audubon Society's Assistant Director, Matt Hayes. **A date has not yet been chosen, so watch the SAS Facebook page or website for upcoming details.** CBC data have been collected now by observers for over 125 years! This makes it the nation's longest-running community science bird project, allowing Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, and wildlife agencies to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America and informing strategies to protect birds and their habitat. Be a part of it!



Tony Rothering of the LLABB explains the characteristics that are determined and documented by banders.



A Black-throated Green Warbler with a new leg band is ready for release at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary.

"The nation's longest-running community science bird project fuels Audubon's work throughout the year."

~National Audubon Society on the importance of their annual Christmas Bird Count



Tufted Titmouse. Photo: Michele Black

[Click here for more information about the Christmas Bird Count](#)

COLLABORATION

THE ILLINOIS RAPTOR CENTER ambassador owls were indoors and outside at stops along the sanctuary's trails and within its council ring at this year's Owl Prowl program. Always a sold-out crowd favorite, this program allowed better understanding of the wonders and challenges of these creatures. We learned about the exceptionally sensitive hearing of the Great Horned Owls and witnessed the silent flight of Lilith the Barn Owl during an indoor demonstration. We also heard about the all-too-frequent occurrence of secondary poisoning as rodenticides and lead make their way to owls through the foods they eat.

The Owl Prowl program is the source of a great deal of enjoyment but also ensures that we do not lose sight of the rehabilitation and conservation work the Illinois Raptor Center performs to assist owls and other species needing their help. Springfield Audubon Society donated all ticket proceeds from the event to the IRC in support of their mission. Click to learn more: [Illinois Raptor Center](https://www.illinoisraptorcenter.org/)



SPRINGFIELD AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERS participated in a Project Wingspan training session and seed collection at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary. Project Wingspan is a Midwestern initiative to expand and enhance pollinator habitat with volunteer-collected, local native wildflower seeds. The project is conducted by Pollinator Partnership and funded by a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The people attending the session at the sanctuary in October began the day with an indoor program on seed collection protocols, which was conducted by the Illinois Project Wingspan Coordinator, Eleanor Schumacher. Armed with a list of target species and bags for seeds, the newly certified attendees headed to the AWS prairie to start collecting.

Project Wingspan is currently working in Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana. Their goal is to enhance and secure over 18,000 acres of high-quality habitat that will support declining species such as monarch butterflies and rusty-patched bumblebees along with all species in need of safe prairie habitat. Every year, Project Wingspan awards locally sourced seeds and plugs to pollinator habitat programs around Illinois. It is exciting to realize the restoration efforts at the AWS prairie assist wildlife not only at the sanctuary but now also at other project areas where our seeds are shared!

Eleanor Schumacher conducts the certification program (top) before collection of targeted species begins. Learn more at <https://www.pollinator.org/wingspan>

HABITAT

Prairie Improvement Efforts Continue

Work done to improve the health of the Adams Wildlife Sanctuary prairie takes place nearly year round. In October, SAS volunteers collected seeds of select species at the Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary to be spread later at the AWS prairie to continue building diversity. Why put in so much effort? Illinois has lost over 99% of its original prairie habitat, which once covered the majority of the state. According to the National Audubon Society, "of the eleven fastest declining grassland and scrubland birds in the nation, seven spend either their winter or summer months in Illinois." SAS seeks to help increase habitat sought by these birds and other creatures.



Seed collection at Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary by SAS volunteers.



The collected seeds are processed for SAS by Nipper's Land Manager, Vern LaGessee.

VOLUNTEER

SPEND TIME IN NATURE WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

As stewards of Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, Springfield Audubon Society offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. These include:

- Assisting the sanctuary crew. Workday activities on Tuesday and Thursday mornings can include trail maintenance, prairie and woodland management, and maintenance of gardens.
- Assisting with children's educational programs.
- Participating in citizen science projects.
- Organizing programs and events.

No experience necessary. No set number of hours required. Come out when you can! You may volunteer or get more information by contacting Mike at mjholinga@icloud.com

Winter Tree Identification Hikes

Jamie Arntzen, Illinois Audubon Society's Director of Land Stewardship, will return to the sanctuary in January to again lead a series of hikes to help identify trees and shrubs by the bark, buds, twigs, and branching patterns. Jamie states that "the hikes in January and February prepare us for the more difficult one in March, when some of the trees begin budding out and can appear different than they had before." Join Jamie in exploring the ever-fascinating strategies and life processes of our valued trees.



January 28th, February 25th, March 25th; 9:00 a.m.

NATURE BOOK CLUB

The perfect book club for nature enthusiasts! Locations for quarterly group discussions alternate between Adams Wildlife Sanctuary and Lincoln Memorial Garden. The club is open to anyone who would like to participate. Join us!



February 3, 2026
Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
10:00 a.m.
The Garden Against Time
by Olivia Laing

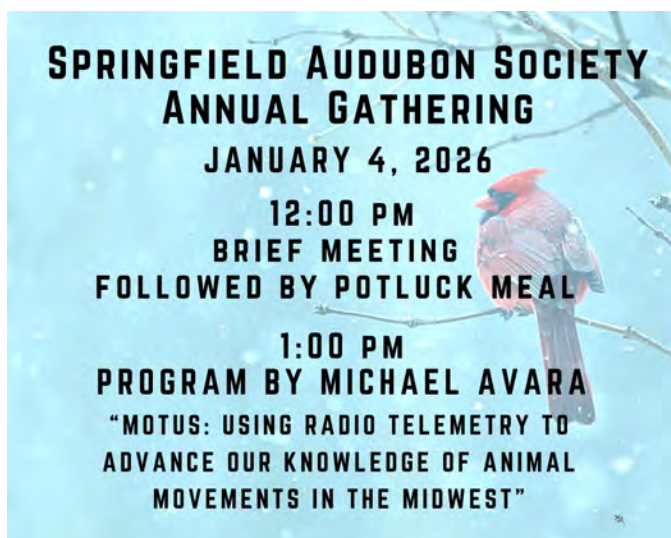


May 5, 2026
Lincoln Memorial Garden
10:00 a.m.
Blue Mind
by Wallace J. Nichols



SAS volunteers after collecting seed for the AWS prairie. Photo: Chris Young

UPCOMING EVENTS



We have a great day in store! A meat dish will be provided for the potluck meal. Please bring a side dish to share.

Program: "Motus: Using Radio Telemetry to Advance Our Knowledge of Animal Movements in the Midwest" presented by Michael Avara, Avian Lab Manager & Field Coordinator, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

While radio telemetry is a tool ecologists have used to study wildlife movement for the past few decades, the development of a collaborative network of antennas and projects across the western hemisphere (Motus) is advancing the data we can collect on the movements of migratory species. Michael Avara will provide an overview of Motus, its current use and presence in Illinois, and examples of some of the data that have been collected to address scientific questions related to movement ecology.



Michael Avara attaches a Motus transmitter to a Wood Thrush as part of a large, range-wide project. Photo courtesy of Michael Avara.

Third Thursday Program

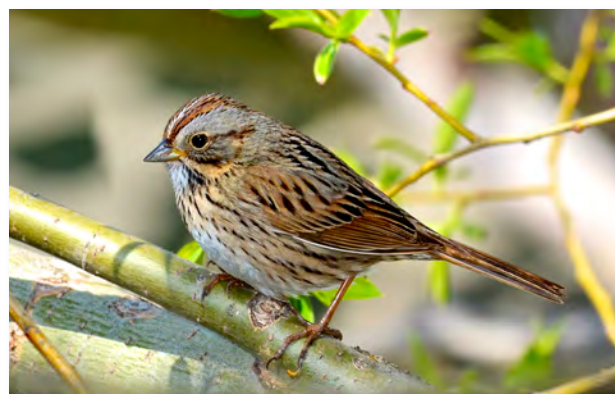
Program: "It's Always Sparrow Season!" presented by Matt Hayes, Assistant Director, Illinois Audubon Society

Date/Time: February, 2026, 6:00 p.m.

"Sparrows are the easiest species to identify!" said no one ever... In fact, many birders often refer to sparrows as LBJs (little brown jobs) or LBBs (little brown birds) because they appear as tan blurs moving through vegetation. Many species, especially those living in the grasslands, can be secretive. Sparrows often sing at the base of a clump of grasses and flowering plants instead of towards the top.

There are twenty-four species of sparrows (families Calcariidae and Emberizidae) that inhabit Illinois for part or all of their annual cycle. Thirteen species migrate through Illinois. Eleven species regularly breed in Illinois – each with its own identifying song and plumage. All breeding sparrow species typically raise two broods (except for the lark and clay-colored) while some (field and song sparrow) can raise up to three broods. Many migrants and breeders may also winter in Illinois during mild weather.

This presentation will help you differentiate these similar looking species using plumage, song, habitat, and phenology. Matt hopes you will discover each has its own beauty, including interesting songs.



Lincoln's Sparrow – one of many sparrow species Matt Hayes will discuss in the program "It's Always Sparrow Season!" Photo: Jackie Bowman

ADAMS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY EVENT CALENDAR

January 4, 2026 Springfield Audubon Society Annual Gathering

12:00 p.m. Brief meeting followed by potluck meal
 1:00 p.m. Program: "Motus: Using Radio Telemetry to Advance Our Knowledge of Animal Movements in the Midwest" presented by Michael Avara, Avian Lab Manager & Field Coordinator, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

TBD Christmas Bird Count
 Annual Christmas Bird Count hike at the sanctuary led by Illinois Audubon Society's Assistant Director, Matt Hayes

**January 28th
 February 25th
 March 25th**
 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. **Winter Tree Identification Hikes**
 Hikes will be led by Illinois Audubon Society's Director of Land Stewardship, Jamie Arntzen, focusing on identification of trees and other woody species using bark, buds, leaf scars, branching patterns, and more.

February 19, 2026 Third Thursday Program
 6:00 p.m. "It's *Al*ways Sparrow Season!" presented by Matt Hayes, Assistant Director, Illinois Audubon Society

All events are free and open to the public.

SAS Officers

Marilyn Robins President
 Debbie Bruce Vice President
 Susan Allen Secretary
 Monica Millburg Treasurer

SAS Board Members

Martha Armour
 Joe Gardner
 Jeanne Handy
 Rhetta Jack
 Vernon Kleen
 Susan Nelson
 Grace Norris
 Matt Hayes Ex Officio



Return of the "Snowbirds"

Dark-eyed Juncos, which are in the New World sparrow family Passerellidae, are considered the "snowbirds" of the middle latitudes. Over most of the eastern U.S., they appear as winter approaches and then retreat back north each spring.
(Cornell Lab)

"Dark-eyed Juncos tend to return to the same area each winter. Chances are that you have many of the same birds at your feeder this winter that you had in previous years."
(Wild Birds Unlimited)

Springfield Wild Birds Unlimited

Remember to inform your Springfield Wild Birds Unlimited cashier that you are a Springfield Audubon Society member. Our chapter receives a percentage of purchases made by members.

As always, we thank Springfield's WBU for continuing to supply all bird feed and feeders for Adams Wildlife Sanctuary.



For Springfield Audubon Society news and updates, follow us on Facebook or check our website at <https://springfieldaudubon.org/>

Springfield Audubon Society

Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
P.O. Box 984
Springfield, IL 62705



Visit the Sanctuary

2315 Clear Lake Avenue
Springfield, IL
Open every day dawn to dusk



JOIN US!

To join us, become a member of Illinois Audubon Society and select Springfield Audubon Society as your chapter. You can join or renew online at illinoisaudubon.org or scan the QR code.

