President’s Message

Sigh…the summer doldrums are upon us. Nesting birds are quiet, busy with parenting duties. Birding is harder with the dense vegetation, not to mention the heat and torment of ticks and mosquitos. But not this year…this year we have Piping Plovers!

For the first time in more than 60 years, Piping Plovers are nesting in Chicago, at Montrose Harbor Dunes, creating a sensation that has captured the hearts and imaginations of birders, wildlife enthusiasts, and people throughout the Chicagoland area. As I write, it is Day 56 of a drama-filled Piping Plover Watch. The nesting pair, aptly named Monty and Rose, produced a first clutch, which was removed for offsite incubation during a severe summer storm. Those eggs sadly failed to thrive. Monty and Rose then produced a second clutch and successfully hatched three chicks. Sadly, one of the chicks died despite efforts of the Lincoln Park Zoo to help the ailing chick.

On the Sunday, I visited Montrose, the four-day old chicks were running about “like fluffballs on toothpicks,” as DBC member Betsy Fikejs calls them. Under the watchful eyes of their parents, they explored their patch of sand, now safely cordoned off from the volleyball courts, beachcombers, and dogs. Piping Plover chicks are precocial, meaning they have feathers and can walk and feed moments after they hatch, though they still cannot fly. That makes them just about the cutest little critters you’ll ever see but also vulnerable to predation since they don’t have the safety of a nest. I fret about that as I watch them.

Lots of other people worry about their safety as well, and there has been a wellspring of support for the plovers. At Montrose, I talked with Sigrid Schmidt, official member of the Piping Plover Watch. “It’s been amazing how the City of Chicago, the IDNR (Illinois Department of Natural Resources), the Fish and Wildlife service, COS and IOS, and other organizations have come together to protect these birds,” she said. “What is happening behind the scenes is impressive.” This has included a successful appeal to cancel Mamby, a planned concert on Montrose Beach that would have brought thousands of people and lots of noise and disruption to the area close to the plovers. That’s big, considering the economic fallout.

What is happening on the scene is impressive too. Sigrid and a cadre of other birders monitor the plovers from 6:00 a.m. to dusk every single day. They’re the ones who no doubt noticed that one of the chicks was not behaving normally and needed help. Every major local news station has covered the unfolding drama. COS member Bob Dolgan has created videos to educate the public and has organized a Kickstarter campaign to make a documentary on the Piping Plover story. We’re owning this here in Chicagoland, and we’re proud of it!
I’m gratified that in the midst of our city of three million residents, in our busy supercharged lives, we can still care about the fate of three tiny birds and their parents. They’ve proved to us once again if we preserve the habitat, if we just go an extra mile to make room for others we share our planet with, they will come. And we will be richer for the diversity of experience they bring to us.

There’s still time to see our plovers. Shake your summer doldrums and catch the fever! To learn more about the Piping Plovers, visit: https://www.chicagobirder.org/plover-watch-2019.

To join the Kickstarter campaign, go here: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/montyandrose/monty-and-rose.

Cheers,      Diann
Many bird species pass through our region twice a year. Some even stay to breed, but then they head south to winter in the neotropics. We like to think of these birds as our birds, and we commonly refer to them in those terms. There is another side to their lives that we seldom think about.

In reality, they are more or less heading home for the winter. The journey is a perilous one full of hazards and hardship. Once they arrive on their wintering grounds, birds face a whole new set of challenges.

Doug Stotz of the Field Museum will discuss these migrants on their wintering grounds, and how they interact with the resident birds in a different habitat. Doug will also interpret these wintering habitats, and the threats that they face which, in turn, impact many bird species.
Don’t Miss Birding and Breakfast August 18!

One of life’s great pleasures is birding. Another is eating. Put them together and you have a perfect start to your day, Birding and Breakfast! AND it is a great opportunity to socialize and get to know your fellow birders! Please join us for a bird walk and casual breakfast at Hidden Lake Forest Preserve, Sunday, August 18. We will begin at 7:30 with a walk through the woods and around the lake. Then at 9:00 breakfast will be served in the picnic shelter. The club will provide bananas, bagels, donuts, juice and coffee. No need to bring anything. If, however, you love to cook and want to bring something to share, feel free to do so. All birders and potential birders are welcome!

This is an activity the club has done it the past that has always been a pleasant morning. As the summer comes to an end it is a great time to get together and share highlights of summer birding experiences with others who share your interest in birding and the outdoors. Hidden Lake has a variety of habitats so you might just be able to pick up one more bird for your summer list, spot a new dragonfly or see a butterfly or two.

Please join us.

Sunday August 18, 7:30am
Hidden Lake Forest Preserve

Hidden Lake is located at the south east corner of HWY 56 (Butterfield Rd) and HWY 53, just north of the Morton Arboretum. The entrance is on the east side of HWY 53, less than a 1/4 mile south of Butterfield Rd across the street from the Walmart. Meet in the parking lot near the shelter.

DBC volunteers plant seedlings at Springbrook workday

Springbrook steward Joe Suchecki and the Forest Preserve of DuPage County invited DBC members to help plant some of the 1,200 plants acquired through the club’s $2,500 donation. A few hardy members braved the mud and the rain to spend a morning in the field. Participants included Mike Kalscheur, Cathy Kotowski, Rick Roche, Denis Kania, and Wes Sadler.
In Case You Missed It: July 11, 2019

A Rare Peek at Rails of the Midwest

**Opening Moments**
After another convivial pre-meeting at Ellyn’s, the meeting began with reports of interesting member sightings. Diann then announced a call for member photos as well as August 18th’s Birding and Breakfast event at Hidden Lake.

Next, richly-deserved Distinguished Achievement Awards for decades-long DBC stalwarts who provided and continue to provide a valuable service in the distribution and editing of our newsletter, Drumming. Pat Newman, Yvonne Dempsey, Andrea Duffy, Jody Zamirowski, and Jeff Smith have contributed to the club in many other ways besides, and all were presented with beautiful framed drawings of Northern Saw-whet Owls, fashioned by DBC VP Denis Kania.

Denis then took the floor and reminded attendees that it’s time to renew membership, that the auction is coming on October 10th at Cantigny, and that we’re looking for Board members for 2020. Contact him to volunteer!

**Mini-Tutorial: McKee Marsh – Glenn Perricone and Kyle Wiktor**

[Link] / [Map]

Next, two of the club’s bright young stars took the stage. Glenn introduced us to McKee’s 600 acres, a patchwork of wetland, old-growth oak savannah, shrubland, dry and mesic prairie, riparian, and edge habitat. Over 250 species have been seen at this large wetland complex, which is part of Blackwell Forest Preserve.

Three platforms ring the main marsh, which is encircled by the Bobolink Trail. To the northwest lies the Catbird Trail, a more wooded path that runs along the west branch of the DuPage and includes added wetland in the form of Sanctuary Pond.

Kyle provided a birders’ four seasons for McKee, where almost all of our local waterfowl species can be found at some time of the year. In spring, these waterfowl are plentiful, and woodcocks are worth looking for in the more open lands. Over spring migration, 175+ species can be found at McKee.

At least 75 species breed and call McKee home in summer, including many wetland birds, plus Bobolinks, Henslow’s Sparrows, Marsh Wrens, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and many flycatchers. In late summer, migration starts up again, with more shorebirds, waders, and waterfowl. There can be 120 species present in September, including American White Pelicans and Rusty Blackbirds.

When temps cool, many waterfowl stick around, making McKee one of best winter birding sites in DuPage, especially when the marsh and river aren’t frozen. Belted Kingfishers, Brown Creepers, Winter Wrens, Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, American Black Ducks, a few sparrows and finches, and—most delectable of all—the Northern Shrike eke out their existence at McKee then.
Stephanie Beilke, Conservation Science Associate with Audubon Great Lakes, was the night’s featured speaker. Her subject was rails—what we know about this secretive, diverse species group, and how her organization is leading management of coastal wetlands, grasslands, and migratory stopovers for these birds.

Rails are oft-hidden, active at night, often walking amidst dense vegetation—and they are also indicators of high-quality wetlands. Despite many species extinctions at human hands, rails are almost everywhere in the world, with 134 species on 7 continents. The Corn Crake, the Takahē, the Purple Gallinule—all are rails.

Although they’re mostly a wetland set, some rails set up shop in woodlands. With long legs and long toes, rails possess the highest avian leg muscle to flight muscle ratio, compensating for their short wings. This makes them adept walkers and strong runners; many also swim and dive well.

Stephanie gave us an entertaining look at our seven local denizens of the marsh, providing each with a nickname.

**King Rail** (The King)
These long-billed, largest rails of our area live in dense, vegetated, marshy wetlands. Their national populations are more southern and coastal, with many found in brackish marsh. Their sound—a loud, repeated clack—and their plumage is beautifully-patterned if you’re patient and fortunate enough to see it.

**Virginia Rail** (The Pig)
Well, it’s call sounds like a grunting pig, and it also has a “tick-it” call. Virginia rails are pretty common in our region, and look like smaller versions of the King. Look for them in vegetation in hemi-marsh (half emergent vegetation, half open water) and shallow water with mudflats. They’re also good swimmers.

**Common Gallinule** (The Jock)
Formerly the “Common Moorhen,” a name now reserved for its European cousin. The Common Gallinule’s Latin name means “helmeted,” and it’s pretty athletic, swimming a lot and giving a characteristic, yipping “wipe out” call. Look for breeding males’ bright red shield above the tip of its bill. Closely associated with cattail, this species especially enjoys emergent marsh with a fair amount of water. Parental aggression behavior toward chicks is common (as it is with coots), and is now thought to urge the youngsters to become more independent.

**American Coot** (The Popular One)
Certainly the most abundant, well-known one! Coots are here year-round in Illinois, where they’re often seen in flocks out on the water, dabbling and diving. They retreat to marshes and denser vegetation during breeding. These white-beaked wonders have curious lobed feet, and make a distinct variety of clucking “krp,” “prik,” and other sounds.

**Sora** (The Loud One)
Walk by any marsh and clap loudly a few times and you may be met with a whinny or “per-weep” from this bird, the most abundant, widespread rail in North America. Soras breed in Chicago, often in small wetlands, are good swimmers and divers, and can also be found probing muddy wetland edges for food.
Yellow Rail (The Shy One)
One of our smaller rails, the Yellow may be more common than is known, enjoying wet sedge meadows and shallower water. A fun way to find one? Go out when night is pitch black and listen for its typewriter call. Typically found further north, Yellow Rails pass through our area in migration. We’re not sure where they like to breed, but they indubitably winter in Jennings, Louisiana, where the birders and farmers get together at the annual Yellow Rails & Rice Festival. Around here, these birds can be found in early May or October. Seek them out at Springbrook Prairie, Whalon Lake, or Fermilab.

Black Rail (The Mysterious One)
Our smallest rail may soon be listed as federally threatened. It’s a more coastal species, enjoying shallow freshwater marsh and wet meadows. It’s highly nocturnal, with a “kee kee” call. Occurrence and population trend data is lacking, and we’re not even sure how to manage for habitat for them. One group that is giving its all, though, is Audubon Louisiana, where the bird has a stronghold at its Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Refuge.

Rails are in decline. Collisions with human-made structures, habitat loss, habitat degradation from invasives like Asian Carp and phragmites grasses, contaminants, and loss of natural hydrological connections all take their toll. Safer buildings, creating wetland openings, and invasive species control are combatting this decline.

Stephanie shared how Audubon Great Lakes’ Calumet Marsh Bird Survey studies wetlands from south Chicago to the Indiana Dunes. The study monitors 17 “secretive marsh birds,” including our rails. The study uses the North American Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol, with 10-minute point surveys and audio playbacks, going out in May and June. From 2015 to 2018, 16 of the 17 target species have been found by monitors.

Stephanie’s tour of our local rails dazzled the crowd and left us eager to encounter these birds as well as do what we can to help them flourish in the Midwest. To get involved or ask questions, email Stephanie at sbeilke@audubon.org.

— Steve Constantelos, DBC Recording Secretary
Five long-time club members were honored at the July DBC meeting for their service over the years editing and producing the Drummings, the club’s newsletter. They were each awarded a Distinguished Achievement Award, a special designation for volunteer efforts above and beyond the call of duty. Featured left to right are Andrea Duffy, Pat Newman, Yvonne Dempsey, and Jody Zamirowski. Not present was Jeff Smith.

Together these five volunteers have contributed 50+ years of service managing our newsletter, which has been a vitally important channel of communication over the last three decades. Pat and Yvonne managed print distribution for as many as 200 copies/issue for approximately 15 years. Andy, Jody, and Jeff have each served multiple years as newsletter editor, compiling and editing each issue, no small effort. Recipients received a beautiful framed print of a Saw-Whet Owl drawn by Denis Kania.
August Field Trips

This month birds are raising their young, molting feathers, preparing for and in some cases already in their fall migration. There are opportunities for all types of birders to participate and enjoy the season. Participants, do remember that weather and trail conditions can be variable. Biting insects can be present. Please dress accordingly and bring insect repellent. We expect everyone to enjoy birding in a safe manner by being careful and prudent. This trip list and more club information is on our DBC website at http://www.dupagebirding.org/

Please note:
Check DuPageBirding.org for any trip changes, additions or cancellations.
If you are interested in leading a field trip please email DBCfieldtrips@dupagebirding.org

Saturday, August 10, 7:30 am
St. James Farm Forest Preserve, Warrenville
The monthly Cantigny walk is migrating to adjacent St. James Farm due to park construction. Like Cantigny, St. James was once a McCormick family property. Please bear in mind that Cantigny walks are often attended by 25 or more birders! Meet in the main parking lot of St. James. Enter off Winfield Rd., just north of Butterfield.
Leader: Jeff Reiter, jreiter@wordsonbirds.com

Sunday, August 11, 7 am
Salt Creek Woods Nature Preserve, Westchester
This can be a very birdy site! Uncommon target birds include: Pileated Woodpecker, Orchard Oriole and Wood Thrush. The walk is mainly on dirt and grass trails and there will also be paved portions. Wear protective clothing and boots for weather and ticks. We will meet at the parking off Brainard Ave. south of 31st Street.
Leader: Alan Seely-James, 954-708-4804, alan_seelyejames@yahoo.com
[Note the underscore between the first and last name in the email].

Friday, August 16 6:00 pm
Know Your Neighborhood: Wood Dale/Itasca
The seventh of twelve ‘Know Your Neighborhood’ trips, exploring hidden gems, odd and under-birded hot spots in DuPage County, we will explore Salt Creek Marsh and the Wood Dale Reservoir, looking for shorebird species. Meet at the parking lot at the end of School St. off of Wood Dale Rd. between Thorndale and Irving Park Rd. We will be walking on paved trails. Be sure to bring a spotting scope if you have one.
Leader: Glenn Perricone, 630-687-2921, gp_arts39@yahoo.com
Sunday, August 18, 7:30 am  
**Birding and Breakfast! Hidden Lake Forest Preserve**  
Join us for the return of one of DBC’s fun traditions, Birding and Breakfast. We will begin at 7:30 with a walk through the woods and around the lake. Then at 9:00 breakfast will be served in the picnic shelter. The club will provide bananas, bagels, donuts, juice and coffee. Come for the walk and breakfast or just join us for the breakfast; all are welcome. It is a great opportunity to socialize and get to know your fellow birders. (If you’re a cook and would like to bring something to share, feel free to do so.)  
Hidden Lake is located at the south east corner of HWY 56 (Butterfield Rd.) and HWY 53, just north of the Morton Arboretum. The entrance is on the east side of HWY 53, less than a 1/4 mile south of Butterfield Rd. across the street from the Walmart. Meet in the parking lot near the shelter.  
**Leader:** Natalie McFaul, natcatcher7@gmail.com

Friday, August 23, 7:30 am  
**Morton Arboretum, Lisle**  
This time of year you never know what you may find at the Arboretum. Let’s meet at parking lot #13 on the east side. Parking lot #13 is across the main road from Big Rock. The Arboretum is located just north of I-88 off Rte. 53 in Lisle. The Arboretum has a per person charge for non-members. Note: the Arboretum does not open its gates until 7:00 am.  
**Leaders:** Marcia & Lee Nye, 630-605-6374, mnye@dupagebirding.org

Sunday, August 25, 6:00 am  
**Momence Sod Farms and Nearby Sites, Kankakee County**  
The sod farms outside of Momence are a stopping point for shorebird species such as American Golden, Black-bellied, and Buff-breasted Plovers during migration. We will check these fields and other surrounding agricultural fields (Western Meadowlark, Vesper Sparrow, etc.) and possibly the nearby Pembroke area. Spotting scopes would be useful. Bring plenty of snacks and drinks. We will stop for lunch in Momence. Pre-registration required by August 24. Please pre-register with Jeff, who will then give you meeting and carpool information.  
**Leader:** Jeff Smith, Cell: 331-481-3362, mrqmagoo13@gmail.com

Saturday, August 31, 7:00 am  
**McKee Marsh, Warrenville**  
Join another morning walk to the marsh. We may focus on the Bobolink Trail to look for the nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers, as well as (we hope) early migrating shorebirds and nesting birds. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Meet at the visitor parking lot on the north side of Mack Rd., located between Winfield Rd. and Rt. 59 in Warrenville. Most of our walk will be on Preserve limestone and earthen trails; wear appropriate shoes and clothing.  
**Leaders:** Kathy and Steve Mineck, Cell: 630-254-4077, kmineck@yahoo.com

For additional birding opportunities check out the Illinois Birding Calendar at [http://www.illinoisbirds.org/calendar-2/](http://www.illinoisbirds.org/calendar-2/) Call us if you have questions about the trips or if you would like to lead a trip. Leaders do not have to be birding experts, just familiar with the location. There is no need to register for trips unless otherwise indicated. Visitors are always welcome. We do not charge fees for birding trips. Field trip information is also found at: [www.dupagebirding.org](http://www.dupagebirding.org)
DuPage Birding Club
P.O. Box 3381
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

First Class

2019 Meetings

January 10

March 14

April 11

May 9

July 11

September 12

October 10

November 14