

Drummings December 2025

President's Letter



Next Meeting

January 8, 2026

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Presentation at 7:00 p.m.

College of DuPage
Health Science Ctr, Rm 1234
425 Fawell Drive
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

Premeeting Dinner

5:30 p.m.
Ellyn's Tap and Grill
940 Roosevelt Rd.
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

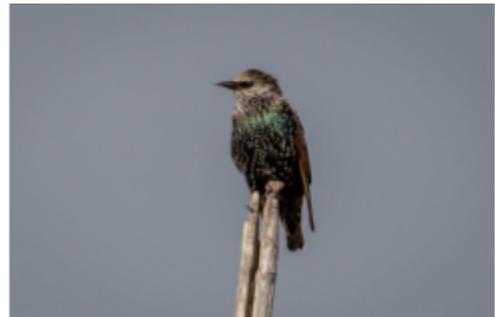
Hello DBCers,

Wow! Can it really be December already? Winding down to the end of an "interesting" year, I can hardly wait to see what 2026 has in store. Hopefully I'll finally get a really good look at a Yellow-breasted Chat. All I can claim so far is a fleeting glimpse of the south side of a bird flying north.

With January's arrival, I will no longer have the privilege of presiding over the DuPage Birding Club. That role will be assumed by Matt Crisler and I am very excited and looking forward to what he will bring to DBC. As someone who does not have either an AARP or Medicare card, Matt brings a fresh approach and new ideas for the club.

I must acknowledge that I really was not the sole person in the President's seat. Whenever I had a question, there was always someone I could call on to help me out. I want to thank all of the Board members and others who were there when I needed help. (Note to all of you who are contemplating volunteering for the VP opening – you will have plenty of help and support.)

Thought while sitting at a traffic light and noticing large number of starlings perched on the utility wires: About 98% of the birds were facing the same direction—into the wind. Not new knowledge. It's easily understood that facing into the wind helps keep their feathers smoothed out, which keeps them warm. It also is a more stable position that helps them balance more securely, allows them to take off more quickly.



European Starling. Photo by Mike Warner.

So what about those nonconformists with their ruffled feathers, fighting to stay in place—what can I learn from them? I decided that most of the time, most of us go with the crowd, which is usually a safer choice. But we need the rebels, the free thinkers, the risk takers in order to move ahead. And how do I apply this brilliant conclusion to birding? In 2026, why not challenge yourself to tackle learning a new class of bird you've been intimidated by, volunteer to lead a bird walk even if you're not an expert on the location, volunteer to help with a special project or event, or share an idea you have

for bird lovers to do. So with that free association lesson finished, I'll say so long for now. Thank you for letting me serve as your President. I hope to see you at a meeting or on the trails.

Good birding,
Thelma Hulka

In Case You Missed It: Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area and Sandhill Cranes



The November 6, 2025, meeting of the DuPage Birding Club featured Nick Echterling, Property Manager of the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area, sharing information about this important wildlife area, home to one of the biggest spectacles of fall migration. Each year, about half of the approximately 110,000 eastern U.S. Sandhill Crane population stages through the preserve—with tens of

thousands of cranes congregating in a single field every night during peak season. Nick fills us in on both the property and the cranes that migrate through it in this video on the DBC Education Channel:

https://youtu.be/Lxp8eo0G_Zg

Christmas Bird Count is December 20...

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the Fermilab Circle is December 20 this year, and the always-fun Countdown Dinner is a go!

This is your chance to join the world's longest running community science program! Now in its 125th year, the CBC brings together bird lovers across the continent to contribute research that helps ornithologists understand bird population abundance and trends.

Here in DuPage County, the DBC sponsors the Fermilab Circle, a 15-mile circle. Compiler Jeff Chapman organizes teams and assigns them to coverage areas to count all the birds they see and hear on this one day in December.

If you have participated in the CBC count last year, you will receive an email from Jeff in early December on plans for this year's count. If it's been awhile since you participated or you'd like to join a team, notify Jeff at jeffchapman948@gmail.com. You do NOT have to be an expert birder to join as you will be part of a team. Birders of all skill levels are welcome!

One of the best parts of the CBC is the Countdown Dinner, where Jeff shares the results of all the teams and we get to learn which birds are most abundant, abundance trends, surprise finds, and more! It is a great way to connect with fellow birders and enjoy a brew and some delicious hot food. See details in our next story.

...And the Countdown Dinner is On!

After your long day on the trails, it's time to relax and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow birders and hear the results for the day in a warm, private room at Cooper's Corner, where Jeff Chapman will lead the tally for DuPage County. at the Annual Christmas Bird Countdown Dinner. Deadline to register for the dinner is December 7. Space is limited to 50 members and cost per member is \$20. If you have never been to this event, it is a hoot! Buffet dinner will be served with several entree choices, including vegetarian and gluten-free options. A cash bar will also be available. Cooper's Corner, 27W150 Roosevelt Rd, Winfield, IL 60190. RSVP to Sherry Courtney at sherrycourtney10@gmail.com or (505) 239-1258.

Annual Gull Frolic Set for February 15

The 24th annual Gull Frolic will happen February 15, 9:30 a.m., at Winthrop Harbor. The marina has been a regular wintering site for a variety of gull species and wintering ducks. Sponsored by the Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS), now part of the Illinois Audubon Society, the Gull Frolic is a great place to hone your gull identification skills with the help of seasoned gull experts like Amar Ayyash by your side. Admission includes a continental breakfast and lunch. Register early because the event typically sells out in early February: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/blog/field-trip/2026-gull-frolic-at-winthrop-harbor/>

Let's Welcome the 2026 DBC Executive Committee!

DBC members, here's your new Executive Committee for 2026. Please give them your hearty support by renewing your dues on time, attending our meetings and field trips, volunteering to help, and sharing your ideas for making the DBC a birding club you're proud to belong to.

Matt Crisler, President

Vice President—OPEN

Rich Gaul, Treasurer

Donnalyn Quint, Corresponding Secretary

Robert Perez, Recording Secretary

Jim Mateski, Director

Steve Constantelos, Director

Elena Nelson, Director

Finally, but no less important, is a big THANK YOU to outgoing officers, which includes President Thelma Hulka, Recording Secretary Mark Freeburg, Director Rob Thomas, and Director Lindsay Vacek. You have all served us well! Thank you for dedicating your time, commitment, and fresh thinking to the DBC. Your leadership has kept us a strong and vital community organization.

A Note from Your Incoming President, Matt Crisler

We are still looking for several volunteers to fill the following club roles, and I urgently ask you to consider them:

Vice President: Schedules speakers for the club's meetings. Participates in the monthly board meetings. This is a two-year commitment as the VP is expected to become the President the following year.

Communications: Helps with the monthly Drumblings newsletter. Posts the meeting recordings to the club's YouTube channel. Helps with other communications items as needed.

Webmaster: Maintains content on the website, such as the field trip listings, newsletters, and other resources. No experience necessary and will work under guidance of senior webmaster.

Grants and Donations: Reviews candidate organizations and projects for applicability to the club's mission. Recommends potential grants to the board for approval. This is important given the influx of funds from our successful auction.

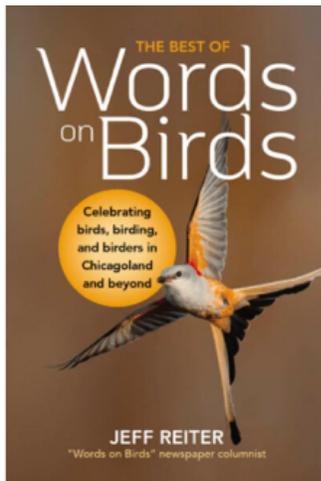
First off, what's become the boilerplate notes at this point: No real experience is necessary for any of these roles, and there'll be plenty of people around you who will be more than happy to get you situated. You do not have to be an expert birder; beginners willing to serve are just as qualified. We just need people who are willing to give it a shot, stretch a little, give back!

For those that didn't get a chance to make the November meeting, I wanted to pass on my thoughts about the situation we currently find ourselves in. This is now the second time in the last three years we have gotten past the election without a VP. For those that haven't heard the story, my nomination is the odd year out, and that only got sorted out a couple of days before the election while I was in New Zealand, so we were pretty darn close to going three for three. While I don't know as much about the history of some of the other volunteer roles, my impression is that despite the club's growth, it's gotten harder and harder over the years to fill out the club's volunteer roster. As a club, we have well north of 350 members. Officially, we only have about 30 volunteer posts, so less than 1 in 10 of us needs to step forward to keep things fully staffed.

As a club, we've benefited from some very long-tenured volunteers, especially in the committee chair roles. Time marches on, however, and understandably people may want to step down, take a break, and focus on other parts of their lives. With this in mind, I want to pose an alternative question—if you don't want to volunteer with the club, what's leading you to make that decision? Are you concerned about the time commitment? experience? skills? something else?

One of the things on my radar for the 2026 calendar year is taking a look at adjusting some of the structure of the club to try to make these annual pleas for volunteers a bit less of a regular agenda item. Your cumulative feedback and viewpoints would be greatly beneficial to guiding that effort. I can be reached via email at crislermj@gmail.com, or you can find me on the field trip calendar as well. Thanks in advance for your input! And think hard about taking on one of our open roles. Let's make sure DBC continues to thrive and provide us all with exceptional birding experiences, educational opportunities, and the camaraderie of other birders.

***The Best of Words on Birds* DBC Book Club Discussion December 11**



It's probably no surprise that the DBC Book Club has chosen *The Best of Words on Birds* as its next read. Authored by our very own Jeff Reiter, the book selects favorite columns from his decades of publishing *Words on Birds* monthly in The Daily Herald. Columns focus on individual species, birding tips and know-how for beginners, interesting people or books in the field, and Jeff's own personal experiences as a birder.

Jeff will join DBC Book Club members for the book discussion on December 11. This promises to be a lively and personal exchange. All members are welcome. For details on the meeting, contact Mike Warner at mwarner2543@gmail.com. To order your copy of the book, visit [The Best of Words on Birds | Eckhartz Press](#).

DBC Apparel Shop Expands Offerings

Did you know DBC members can celebrate and show off their DBC pride with apparel and accessories delivered right to their door? Our club's online store has just added new shirt designs and eco-friendly water bottles to its selection of items, all featuring our venerable, adorable Downy Woodpecker logo.

Our shirts, outerwear, bags, and bottles make great holiday gifts for your bird-loving friends too. Get started with your shopping here: <https://dupagebirding.org/shop/>.

Annual Membership Renewal Time

It's time to renew your dues for next year! **Your annual membership dues for 2026 are due by December 31, 2025.** Dues remain \$20 for individuals, \$30 for families and \$10 for students. Please note that any new member joining on or after September 1 is automatically registered for the following year. Your dues fund our annual operations and support a broad range of activities, including field trips,

interesting speakers, research grants, and proactive community outreach. Help us stay strong! Your 2026 dues may now be paid in any of the following ways:

1. On-line through our website using PayPal or credit card, at this link: <https://dupagebirding.org/renew/>
2. By mailing a check to: DuPage Birding Club P.O. Box 3381 Glen Ellyn, IL 60138.
3. Giving cash or a check in person to a board member. Thank you for your support and membership.

Welcome to our Newest Member!

Heidi Rose Naperville

December 2025 Field Trips

There are opportunities for all types of birders to participate and enjoy. As always, nonmembers are welcome to register after the first of the month. There are no fees for birding trips.

Please remember that the weather can be variable, so dress accordingly. We expect everyone to enjoy birding in a safe manner by being careful and prudent. Field trip information is also found at: www.dupagebirding.org.

NOTE: When possible last-minute changes are posted on www.dupagebirding.org/field-trips.

Participants are welcome to contact the leader if they have any questions. Our field trip leaders can help you find the trip's starting location if you need additional directions.

NOTE: For trips with a participant limit, registration with the trip leader is required. In those cases, you are NOT registered until you receive a confirmation from the trip leader.

Trips will observe a few guidelines to ensure that birding is safe and comfortable for all:

- Anyone not feeling well should stay home.
- Attendees of DBC field trips and other events under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- All field trip attendees should be aware of and follow the <https://dupagebirding.org/aba-code-of-ethics/>

Saturday, December 6, 11:45 am – 6:30 pm, Jasper-Pulaski Sandhill Crane Observation Area, Medaryville, IN

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 12 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on December 1.

The [Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area](#) is known for its large Sandhill Crane population during fall

migration, with peak counts reaching between 15,000-30,000. We'll meet at 11:45 am, in the [Villa Park free public parking lot](#) on Villa Ave just south of Wildwood Ave to carpool. Please let me know if you're available to drive and/or ride in another's car. First stop will be a short out and back trail on Nature Conservancy land. Sightings here can be surprising, so we will see what shows up. We will not be walking around Jasper-Pulaski itself, as it is open for hunting season. There is also a nearby shooting range, so expect to hear gunfire. After that, we'll drive around looking for cranes in nearby farm fields. We'll head to the observation tower one hour before sunset to watch flocks of Sandhill Cranes kite into the refuge from all directions. They gab and socialize before returning to roosting marshes at dusk. International Crane Foundation (ICF) staff will be at the tower to answer your crane questions. Dress for the weather and bring a scope if you have one.

Carpool Meeting Place: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/R7v4veCehsWtmviK8>

Leader: Elena Nelson, ladylena76@gmail.com

Wednesday, December 10, 8:00 am – 10:30 am, Morton Arboretum, West Side, Lisle

Registration with the leader is required. Registration for nonmembers opens on December 1.

We will meet at Thornhill parking lot P21 and explore the area. We are looking for winter resident birds and hopefully some migrants from the north. New birders are welcome to join. Arboretum members are free. There is a charge for nonmembers. Please contact leaders for possible discount.

Leaders: Mike and Karen Warner, mwarner2543@gmail.com, (630) 640-2450

Tuesday, December 16, 8:00 am – 10:30 am, Herrick Lake Forest Preserve, Wheaton

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 10 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on December 1.

This field trip will include about 4 miles of walking through open grassland and wooded trails. We will look for winter birds including some raptors known to frequent here. We will walk on limestone trails out and back on the same path. Meet at the east end of the parking lot off Butterfield Road, by the restrooms and boat house. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/dm7Ak52QQwcGgUjk9>

Leader: Nancy Allured, nallured@gmail.com

Wednesday, December 17, 8:00 am – 11:00 am, McKee Marsh, Warrenville

Registration is not required. There is no limit to the number of participants.

Join us for a walk around the marsh as we search for the variety of bird species that spend the winter here. We will be walking for 3.25 miles on preserve limestone and earthen trails. Be sure to wear appropriate footwear and clothing for the weather. Meet at the visitor parking lot on the north side of Mack Rd., located between Winfield Rd. and Rt. 59. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/tcoGDz9MN7ewnNvq5>

Leader: Kyle Wiktor, (708) 506-5186

Thursday, December 18, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Springbrook Prairie, Naperville

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 10 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on December 1.

Short-eared Owls frequently winter at Springbrook Prairie and can be seen as they come out to hunt over the preserve at dusk. We will walk a short distance off-trail to wait for the owls to appear. Dress very warmly since we will be standing in one place as the sun goes down. Note that the owls are generally pretty far away and often appear just as the light is failing, so this trip does not offer a photo-op. The trip will last about 40-50 min. The owls do not always winter at Springbrook and the trip will be canceled if they are not around or in the event of inclement weather. Meet at the Model Aircraft Field Parking Lot on Plainfield-Naperville Rd., south of 75th St. in Naperville.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/p9BR3fJosNn8FSk98>

Leader: Joe Suchecki, Register via email: dbcsec2020@gmail.com, (630) 842-4921

Saturday, December 20, 7:00 am – 4:00 pm, Christmas Bird Count, Fermilab Circle

Registration is required by December 13, 2025.

Join us for The DuPage Birding Club-sponsored Christmas Bird Count. This is your chance to contribute to an important community science opportunity. Data collected provides invaluable insights into winter bird populations. It's also a great opportunity to connect with fellow birders. If you participated last year, you are already on the list and will be contacted in early December. If you are new to the Christmas Bird Count, please contact the compiler, Jeff Chapman, for details and to be assigned to a location and area captain. Remember you'll be grouped with a team, so no need to be an expert.

Leader: Jeff Chapman, jeffchapman948@gmail.com

Saturday, December 20, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm, Annual Christmas Bird Countdown Dinner, Cooper's Corner, Winfield

RSVP is required. Deadline to register is December 13. Space is limited to 50 members. Cost per member \$20.

Come count down with us! After a day of team birding for the DBC Christmas Bird Count, we will gather in a warm, private room at Cooper's Corner, where Jeff Chapman will lead the tally for DuPage County. If you have never been to this event, it is a hoot! Buffet dinner will be served with several entree choices, including vegetarian and gluten free options. A cash bar will also be available.

Cooper's Corner, 27W150 Roosevelt Rd, Winfield, IL 60190

RSVP by December 13 to Sherry Courtney at sherrycourtney10@gmail.com or (505) 239-1258.

Sunday, December 28, 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm, Lyman Woods, Downers Grove

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 15 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on December 1.

We will be looking for common woodland wintertime residents.

We will conclude the trip with a brief search for the resident Great Horned Owls around and after sunset. Dress very warmly as we may be stationary at times. A red flashlight or headlamp is recommended. Meet at the parking lot on 31st Street. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Vf3YKmyeJSDr5fxT7>

Leader: Matt Crisler, crislermj@gmail.com

Thursday, January 1, 2026, 8:00 am – 10:00 am, St. James Farm Forest Preserve, Warrenville

There is no limit to the number of participants. Registration is required for planning and updates in case of bad weather.

NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRDING

The bird club has a tradition of New Year's Day birding, so come one, come all to St. James Farm to start the new year right! We'll meet by the horse statue and walk about 2 miles along gravel paths and possibly some grass or deer paths depending on conditions. Due to increased pricing at the Morton Arboretum we are trying something new so there is no cost barrier to joining.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/u5pnCS3WPA6Q9Gb78>

Leader: Elena Nelson, ladylena76@gmail.com

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Springbrook Prairie, Naperville

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 10 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on January 1.

Short-eared Owls frequently winter at Springbrook Prairie and can be seen as they come out to hunt over the preserve at dusk. We will walk a short distance off-trail to wait for the owls to appear. Dress very warmly since we will be standing in one place as the sun goes down. Note that the owls are generally pretty far away and often appear just as the light is failing, so this trip does not offer a photo-op. The trip will last about 40-50 min. The owls do not always winter at Springbrook and the trip will be canceled if they are not around or in the event of inclement weather.

Meet at the Model Aircraft Field Parking Lot on Plainfield-Naperville Rd., south of 75th St. in Naperville. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/p9BR3fJosNn8FSk98>

Leader: Joe Suchecki, Register via email: dbcsec2020@gmail.com, (630) 842-4921

Additional birding opportunities:

Accessible Bird Walks at Cantigny are open to birders of all levels and abilities. If you enjoy a leisurely walk on beautiful grounds, there is plenty of capacity! Check the Cantigny calendar every month for dates at <https://cantigny.org/events/>. A parking fee of \$6.00 will apply; no fee for the walk itself.

Area Forest Preserves may have birding opportunities. Check out DuPage at <https://www.dupageforest.org/calendar-of-events>, Cook County at www.fpdcc.com/events, and Will County Forest Preserves District at <https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/>. Area bird clubs also offer additional opportunities, for example, check out Kane County Audubon at <https://kanecountyaudubon.com/>.

Questions/Comments: Email us if you have questions, would like to lead a trip, or have an idea for a trip. Leaders do not have to be birding experts, just familiar with the location.

Field Trip Coordinators:

Stephanie Cullerton, stephcullert@yahoo.com

Faye Barakat, barakatnfaye@gmail.com
Sherry Courtney (special trips), sherrycourtney10@gmail.com

DBC's Fall '25 Photo Contest Closing Soon

The DBC is looking for pictures of birds taken between September 1, 2025, and November 30, 2025. Entries will be accepted until **December 7**. All photos are welcome: amateur, funny, imperfect, high-quality. The "story behind the shot" is taken into account when judging. The judges want this to be a fun contest; no categories have been predefined for award winners so every entry has a chance to win!

Note: the judges ask that you limit the number of photos entered to five or less. They usually do not give out more than one award to the same author if they submit multiple images.

If you would like to look at past DBC Photo Contest winners [CLICK HERE](#).

The contest is open to DBC members only. Photos may be taken anywhere (not just DuPage/Illinois). If a picture includes people, the submitter must have permission from those people to publish their image on the DBC website. Photographs will be judged by a small team of DBC members.

There are two ways to enter your bird photographs:

If you have a Google Account (you have one if you use Gmail) click the link below:

[DBC Photo Contest Entry Form](#)

If you do not have a Google Account, email your image as an email attachment to dupagebirdingclub@gmail.com. In the body of your email include:

- a) Your name.
- b) The species of the bird(s).
- c) Where the picture was taken.
- d) A Catchy Caption - Enter a caption or title you would like displayed with your pictures. (Optional)
- e) Narrative - Tell us about your picture - what's the story behind the shot? Include any information the judges might need to fully appreciate your shot.

Good luck! Winners will be announced in the January Drumming.



DuPage Birding Club

2026 Meeting Schedule

January 8	July 9
March 12	September 10
April 9	October 8
May 14	November 12

2025 DBC Executive Committee Members

President: Matt Crisler
 Vice President: OPEN
 Treasurer: Rich Gaul
 Recording Secretary: Robert Perez
 Corresponding Secretary: Donnalyn Quint
 Director: Jim Mateski
 Director: Steve Constantelos
 Director: Elena Nelson



2025 Committee Chairs

Audio-Visual Coordinator: Robert Perez
 Bird Conservation Network: Glenn Gabanski,
 Jim Green, Diann Bilderback, Glenn Perricone
 Christmas Count Coordinator: Jeff Chapman
 Communications: Diann Bilderback
 DBC Apparel: Steve Constantelos
 DBC Book Club: Mike Warner
 Drummings Newsletter: Diann Bilderback
 Email Distribution: Bob Fisher
 Facebook: John Cebula
 Field Trips: Stephanie Cullerton, Faye Barakat,
 Sherry Courtney (special trips)

Flickr: Urs Geiser
 Forest Preserve Liaison: Dennis Streicher
 Grants and Donations: OPEN
 Hospitality: Bonnie Graham
 Instagram: Henry Meade
 Membership Directory: Susan Kaley
 Outreach/Youth Education: Mike Warner
 Photo Contest: Mike Warner
 Spring Bird Count: Joe Suchecki
 Webmasters: Barb Dougan, Nancy Allured
 X: Vera Miller
 YouTube Ed Channel: Denis Kania, Steve Constantelos