

Drummings January 2026

President's Letter



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Hi all,

I hope you're having and/or had a wonderful holiday season. The New Year officially marks the start of the term for all of us in new roles on the Board. I'd like to start by expressing my thanks for our outgoing board members—Thelma Hulka, Mark Freeburg, and Rob Thomas. I'd like to give a particular shoutout to Thelma for leading the way over this past year and giving me a stable jump off point for 2026.

With the presidency comes the responsibility to open each month's newsletter, and for better or for worse that means you're all going to be stuck with my attempts at writing for the next 12 months. For those that don't know me, my day job is in engineering. Engineers are not known for their linguistic prowess, especially where entertainment value is concerned, and I'm not much of an exception to that stereotype. As such, I'm probably going to stick to business whenever possible to save everyone the trouble.

That said, there should be plenty of business to discuss. In addition to keeping the main programs we're all here for going, I'm hoping 2026 will also be a year where we can improve our offerings as well as the way we operate. First off, if you didn't notice the extra entry on our Committee Chairs list that popped up last month, Sherry Courtney has volunteered to spearhead a new role under the field trip umbrella for "Special Trips." The idea behind this is to facilitate significant trips such as the multiday Magee Marsh trip we did last year (which was absolutely fantastic, but I might be biased). This will hopefully allow us to do those on a more regular basis. There will be more to come in this area, and I hope you're all as excited as I am to see where this goes.

Another area of focus for me this year is going to be the way the club is structured. At a high level, the way we do things today works, but having been in the middle of things over the last year as VP, there's a lot of ways it could work better. That's precisely the kind of problem that my engineer

Next Meeting

January 8, 2026

Zoom Only

Presentation at 7:00 p.m.

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

Premeeting Dinner

NO DINNER IN JANUARY

5:30 p.m.

Ellyn's Tap and Grill
940 Roosevelt Rd.
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

brain can't pass up, so we are planning to take a crack at a revision to the bylaws this year. That may raise a few eyebrows, so I want to be clear about the parameters here—I firmly believe the actual programs we run don't need to change, just how we go about organizing them. The goal here is to adjust things so that we can position our existing volunteers for the greatest success as well as make volunteering with the club more accessible for those stepping into it for the first time (by the way, VP is still open... wink wink nudge nudge). I do also intend to keep you all informed about the Board's direction here as we move along this process, so expect to see more whether in this newsletter or through other channels.

Lastly, as we go through this process of change and development, I do want to invite all of your feedback. Whether you've been around since the start or just joined, my inbox is always open and you can also find me on the field trip calendar nearly every month. If you have ideas for ways to make this club better, let me know! In my experience, the best outcomes come from letting people take the initiative with the ideas they care about, and I'd be happy to help you get something new and exciting started.

With that, I'll wish you all a Happy New Year and happy birding—see you out there!

Matt

crislermj@gmail.com

January 8 Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Via Zoom Only

Motus: Using Radio Telemetry to Advance Our knowledge of Animal Movements in the Midwest

Presented by: Michael Avara, University of Illinois

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. This presentation provides an overview of Motus, its current use and presence in Illinois, and examples of some of the data that has been collected to address scientific questions related to movement ecology.



Michael Avara is the avian lab manager and field coordinator at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who supports lab data collection and analysis on the many diverse research projects in the Ward Lab. This includes managing over 50 Motus stations in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Mexico; working to restore endangered waterbird colonies; conducting field surveys to quantify bird populations; and studying migratory stopover behavior of Saw-whet Owls.

This meeting is Zoom only! [Register here.](#)

Christmas Bird Count

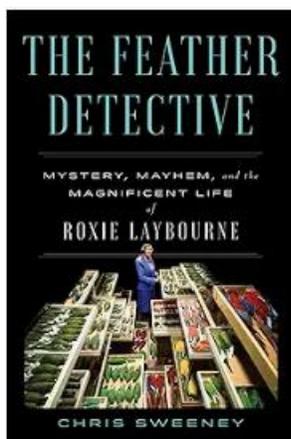
The weather mostly cooperated on Saturday, December 20, for the Fermilab circle Christmas Bird Count, with temps in the 30s and low 40s. The birds did as well, and we reported 80 species, one more than last year's tally but less than our all-time high of 93.

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.

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 was a great way to connect with fellow birders and enjoy a brew and some delicious hot food. Watch for the February Drummings, which will feature the complete species count.



Next Up at the DBC Book Club—*The Feather Detective: Mystery, Mayhem, and the Magnificent Life of Roxie Laybourne*



Lauded by multiple sources as one of the best nonfiction books of 2025, *The Feather Detective: Mystery, Mayhem, and the Magnificent Life of Roxie Laybourne*, by Chris Sweeney, shares the fascinating biography of the world's first forensic ornithologist. Using nothing more than her microscope and bits of feathers, Smithsonian scientist Roxie Laybourne investigated deadly airplane crashes and helped prosecute murderers, kidnappers, and poachers. She broke down barriers for women in science and pioneered a new field in forensics. "A biography that reads like a novel," said The Wall Street Journal. This one promises to be a great read to start the new year!

For details on the meeting, contact Mike Warner at mwarner2543@gmail.com.

Annual Membership Renewal Time

Your annual membership dues for 2026 were due on 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.

Outreach

Darien Garden Club, “Spring Gardening Inspiration” Event

March 7, Chuck’s Chateau Orleans Banquets, Darien, 8:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

DBC will host an exhibit table at this event, which features multiple speakers, a luncheon, and exhibits. Rob Thomas will represent the club. Darien Garden Club has more than 200 members. To register or learn more information about this event, visit: <https://dariengardenclub.com/events>.

Welcome, New Members!

Suzanne Arch	Oak Brook
Jenna Drolen	Itasca
Linda Fischer	Orland Park
Luke Miller	Lisle

January 2026 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/>

Wednesday, December 31, 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm, Lyman Woods, Downers Grove

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 15 participants.

This trip is a reschedule from 12/28 due to inclement weather. 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.

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

Sunday, January 4, 2026, 8:00 am – 10:00 am, Centennial Trail, Lemont

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

The goal of this trip will be to help participants get early additions to their year lists. This area can have great diversity of waterfowl, so we will be looking for Common Goldeneye, mergansers, etc. We will meet in the gravel parking lot at the end of Canal Bank Road. If using navigation, search for 15112 Canal Bank Rd, Lemont. Feel free to ask questions on how to get there after you RSVP.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/MFJjyyMduu9q1a386>

Leader: Henry Meade, meadehenry21@gmail.com (224) 319-4377

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 falling, 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, January 10, 2026, 7:30 am – 10:30 am, McKee Marsh, Warrenville

Registration is not required.

Join us for a walk around the marsh in search of the wide variety of bird species that overwinter at this site. This will be a 3.25 mile walk on preserve limestone and earthen trails. Wear appropriate shoes and clothing for the weather. Meet at the visitor parking lot located on the north side of Mack Road, to the east of Rte. 59 and west of Winfield Road.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/nqjzSJkfqZcSimPd8>

Leader: Kyle Wiktor, (708) 506-5186

Sunday, January 11, 2026, 2:45 pm – 6:00 pm, Lyman Woods, Downers Grove

Registration with the leader is required. Limit 15 participants. Registration for nonmembers opens on January 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 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/mtddFUwocgK1RULz6>

Leader: Matt Crisler, crislermj@gmail.com

Friday, January 16, 2026, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm, Seager Park, Naperville

No registration required.

New birders welcome at this afternoon walk to see what birds have spent the winter with us in this 30-acre patch of woods, ephemeral wetland, and edge habitat. We'll keep our eyes and ears open for woodpeckers, raptors, crows, etc. With luck, we may see an owl stirring at dusk. Trails are mixed. Dress warmly! Meet at the Seager Park parking lot at 1163 Plank Road, Naperville. Indoor restrooms available!

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/h36m17FE7ShTtiL79>

Leader: Steve Constantelos, steve.constantelos@gmail.com (630) 890-8956

Sunday, January 18, 2026, 8:00 am – 10:00 am, Whalon Lake-Boat Parking Lot, Naperville

Registration with the leader is required. No limit on participants.

We'll walk along the paved trail around the lake looking for waterfowl and winter residents. The leader will provide updates in case of bad weather.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/eTDfs3E3QgBJqufZ7>

Leader: Elena Nelson, ladylena76@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, March 21, 2026, All-Day Trip, Mississippi River Waterfowl Trip

Jeff Chapman will lead an all-day trip exploring spots along the Mississippi River, both in Illinois and Iowa. Waterfowl, cranes, eagles, pelicans and more make for a rewarding day of birding. Details and reservation guidelines to come.

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

Elena Nelson, ladylena76@gmail.com

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

Announcing DBC's Summer/Fall '25 Photo Contest Winners!

The winners of DBC's Summer/Fall '25 photo contest have been finalized! The entries were judged by Andie Duffy, Robert Perez, Steve Constantelos, and Mike Warner. The committee would like to thank all the photographers for their entries. It was very difficult to narrow it down from 29 entries to these award winners.

Best of Show

Photographer: James J. Goldsmith

Species: Rufous Hummingbird

Location: Baker, Nevada

Narrative: In September, my wife Kristina and I stayed overnight at the Hidden Canyon Ranch in Baker, Nevada, in preparation for a visit to nearby Great Basin National Park. As we were getting ready to leave, I noticed a Rufous Hummingbird darting quickly around a nearby cluster of Russian Sage. The Hummingbird was in a hurry but stayed long enough for me to get this photo before racing into the canyon.



“The Call of Summer” Award

Photographer: Kent Jager

Species: Orchard Oriole

Location: Morton Arboretum

Narrative: I heard this Orchard Oriole calling but couldn't locate him. After some time, he flew down a lot closer to me and I was able to get this shot.



Namaste

Photographer: Sherry Courtney

Species: Great Blue Heron

Location: The pond next to my home, Naperville, IL

Narrative: I had been admiring this Great Blue Heron for months, fishing in the pond next to my home. One day, he and a Great White Egret seemed to be facing off in the pond. I took my little antique, Nikon P100 outside to see if I could get a nice shot. After the egret slowly walked away, the heron turned, dipped his head upside-down, in what seemed like a contortionist move, straightened himself up, and opened his wings in a way I had never seen, nor did I ever think was possible. I watched and took pictures for almost 7 minutes. Then, he began to make strange sounds with his mouth open, as the muscles in his neck visibly vibrated. I thought it may have been a mating dance/call, until I looked it up and read about the delta wing formation and gular fluttering. What a privilege to see this outside my back door. Only in DuPage!



“Wading For A Lifer” Award

Photographer: Elena Nelson

Species: Louisiana Waterthrush

Location: Waterfall Glen

Narrative: It was hot, humid and overcast, an utterly awful day which led to the incredible circumstance of us having the Sawmill Creek trail all to ourselves (on summer weekends it's usually full of kids and dogs playing in the creek). Just as the trail turned uphill off the water's edge, I spotted a waterthrush in the shadows under a shrub on the side of the creek bed. It was a bad look, but we all got to see it before it fluttered upstream. I really wanted a good picture and was hoping I could make it through the brush on the side of the cliff to the edge, but it was all covered in poison ivy and I was, as usual in the heat, wearing my hiking dress. I then decided I was already soaked with sweat, wouldn't drown in 3 inches of water, and wet boots would be worth it. So I went into the water. I carefully stepped and slipped my way up the wet rocks on the side of the creek, falling on my @ss only once without harming the camera. I was rewarded with two photo shoots and one memorable photo! Lifer!



“Brazilian Beauty” Award

Photographer: Joe Nowak

Species: Scaled Ground-Cuckoo

Location: Cristalino Lodge, Brazil

Narrative: We were provided the opportunity to see this rare bird in a special hide from 1 to 3 pm during our last three days at the lodge—when most people are resting during the heat of the day. The ground-cuckoo did not make an appearance until we had less than 45 minutes to go on the last day.



“Lockport Luminosity” Award

Photographer: Laurie Lasseter

Species: Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Location: Lockport Prairie, Lockport IL

Narrative: This hummingbird was loving these orange flowers and in this photo it looks like it is inhaling the flower.



“Seeing Double” Award

Photographer: Julie Wettermann

Species: Hooded Merganser (female)

Location: Rio Grande Nature Center and SP, Albuquerque

Narrative: When life gives you a huge snowstorm in Chicago and delays your vacation return flight, go birding! In my found time the Saturday after Thanksgiving, I checked out this nature center and State Park near Albuquerque and found a large group of waterfowl in the pond. This lovely lady was of course accompanied by her mate, but since everyone always fawns over him, I thought I'd give her some attention for a change. She was kind enough to give me good looks, and I love the reflection in the calm water and how the water droplets are still clinging to her feathers.



“Florida Animal Act” Award

Photographer: John Obenland

Species: Tri-colored Heron

Location: Lake Buena Vista, FL

Narrative: It's mid November and what do birders do to see some new birds—migrate to Florida, as well as to see grandkids! At our resort which has a pond and is partially wooded, it is not unusual to see various shorebirds. Also it is not uncommon to see an example of the infamous alligator. It is rather rare though to get both in the same shot a few feet away from each other. The gator is doing its "relaxed sunbathing" thing. The heron is doing its "keeping busy" routine, pecking away at the vegetation and shallow water. What's going on here—is this just another Florida "animal act" to entertain the tourists? It worked!



“In Your Face” Award

Photographer: Laurie Lasseter

Species: Northern Harrier (female)

Location: Lockport Prairie

Narrative: It was the first time a female Northern Harrier showed up this fall and she flew right by me. I was able to capture her intensity as she flew by.



Our Winter/Spring 2026 Photo Contest starts January 1. See the following story for details.

You can see all pictures posted to the DBC Website, including past Photo Contest Winners, by [CLICKING HERE](#).

DBC's Winter/Spring '26 Photo Contest Is Now Open!

The DBC's Photo Contest has changed from four times per year to two contests each year and is now looking for pictures of birds taken between January 1, 2026, and June 30, 2026. 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 so no categories have been predefined—every entry has a chance to win!

Note: the judges* ask that you limit the number of photos you enter to five or less. They usually do not give out more than one award to the same photographer 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.

Good luck! Winners will be announced in the August Drummings.

There are two ways to enter your bird photographs:

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

[DBC Photo Contest Entry Form](#)

- 2) If you do not have a Google Account, email your image as an email attachment to duplicatebirdingclub@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.

*** We're always looking for more Photo Contest Judges. If you might be interested, email Mike Warner at mwarner2543@gmail.com. No experience necessary!**



2026 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

2026 Committee Chairs

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, Elena Nelson, Sherry Courtney (special trips)
Flickr: Urs Geiser
Forest Preserve Liaison: Dennis Streicher

2026 Meeting Schedule

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

Grants and Donations: Joe Suchecki, Carl Strang, Thelma Hulka, Elena Nelson
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 Education Channel: Denis Kania, Steve Constantelos