

# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

MARCH 2015 [www.ensbc.org](http://www.ensbc.org)



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

## IT TAKES A BOARD By Eleonora di Liscia

A bird club is not a spontaneous enterprise.

Field trip leaders do not magically appear at appointed places. Program speakers do not drop in on club nights that fourth Tuesday of the month.

Running a bird club takes a dedicated cadre of volunteers. In short, it takes a board.

ENSBC's membership year kicks off in April. In June, the board holds an annual picnic to discuss ideas for the upcoming year's field trips and program nights.

After the June meeting, Libby Hill, Field Trip and Program Chair, contacts past field trip leaders to see if they will return as well as soliciting new recruits. David Johnson, Assistant Field Trip Chair, organizes and leads special getaways. "I simply like to share my birding enthusiasm with others," he said.

For programs, Libby tries to invite speakers who are on the cutting edge of research. "Sometimes they're putting together a presentation for the first time, and they try it out on us," she said.

Throughout the year, Libby contacts leaders and speakers to confirm that programs and trips are moving forward as planned.

Libby most enjoys meeting new people and learning what they're doing. She also likes "the communication and coordination with other people. The board will not work unless there is coordination among the board, and there is a lot of coordination."



**The Evanston North Shore Bird Club board.** Pictured from left to right: Nancy, Libby, John, Lloyd, Ann, Eleonora, Dave, Jennifer, Gary, Phyllis, Lois. Photo by Lloyd Davidson

For example, the new trip and program schedule must be ready in time for President Gary Hantsbarg to produce the membership directory in the fall. Libby also ensures that program and field trip information go to the website, membership brochure, directory, newsletter, Facebook and Suzanne Checchia, e-news bulletin editor. While not an official board member, Suzanne's e-news has been invaluable to the club.

Publicity Chair Phyllis Reynolds then sends information about club activities to media outlets such as the Pioneer Press. She enjoys "meeting the people on the board and hearing their different points of view. It inspires me to go on some trips. It's such an impressive group of skilled birders," she said.

As President, Gary hosts program nights. When he is unavailable, Vice President Jennifer Schmidt steps in. "There has to be a board to keep the club going," Jennifer said, "And it is important to me that the club persists and is active and engaged in

creating new members."

Archivist Lois Shelgren preserves the minutes, newsletter and other club materials in the archives. Lois enjoys helping the club promote birds and birding. The archives provide the club with continuity, she said, "The club archives help with decision making. It's an old club, so I think that's fascinating for anyone who wants to look back at the history."

The board generally meets three times a year. Nancy Halliday, Recording Secretary, memorializes each meeting in the minutes, which provides a historical record for the club. She enjoys serving because: "It's a great way to find out what the club is doing and be really useful and be a part of something that I enjoy," she explained.

Treasurer John Hockman presents the budget at the October meeting. The board can then make decisions such as whether to upgrade the website or support a young birder's scholarship.

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## IT TAKES A BOARD CONTINUED FROM COVER

John tracks all money in and out of the club. In spring, he receives membership dues to record and deposit. He records the purpose of any other income he receives, such as whether it's for a new membership or donation. John pays the club's bills and files the annual reports to maintain the club's non-profit status.

"The job had to be done, and I wanted to do something for the club. I've never led a field trip, and I've never given a presentation. Those aren't my thing, and this was something I could do," he said.

As the membership year comes to a close in spring, Ann Tanner, Membership Chair, sends out renewals. Ann maintains the membership database. She alerts the board when members have died or moved. Nancy, who also serves as Corresponding Secretary, sends condolences as needed, congratulations for special occasions or thank you notes for special donations.

Throughout the year, Conservation Chair Lloyd Davidson writes

articles for Bird Calls. He attends Bird Conservation Network along with Libby and Suzanne Checchia to keep up with local bird conservation issues or programs. He enjoys serving on the board because, "I quite enjoy the group. It's a very bright group of people, and it's always fun to intermix with intelligent people."

So, while every board member has his or her own reason for serving on the board, why does it really matter? Why dedicate all that energy to keeping ENSBC alive instead of putting it somewhere else?

Libby best sums it up: "I think that the more understanding of birds that we can bring to the general public, the better it is for the whole environment. You can't protect what you don't know about. Bird clubs are important because they reach different audiences, and we want to reach as many audiences as possible."

As the club approaches its 100th anniversary in 2019, I'm sure founding mother Mrs. Frederick (Bertha) Pattee would agree.

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## CONSERVATION COLUMN: POP-UP WETLANDS FOR CALIFORNIA WATER BIRDS

By Lloyd Davidson

Millions of birds follow the Pacific Flyway each year through California's Central Valley, travelling between the Arctic and South America. Many of these depend for their survival on finding food in wetlands along the way.

Unfortunately, California has lost 90% of the original wetlands in this region as a consequence of their being filled in for housing and business developments and turned into farmland. Over the last few years the ravages of the West Coast drought has made the situation even more dire for these feathered migrants as many of even the few remaining natural wet areas have disappeared. For example, there has been a 20% drop in the numbers of mallards there just since 2013, from approximately 300,000 down to 240,000.

However, one bright spot appeared last year with the development of a trial agreement between some rice farmers and the Nature Conservancy in which this organization paid a small number of willing rice farmers to keep their fields flooded for a few weeks beyond the end of January,

the date when the fields would normally be drained to be fully dried out in time for the planting in March. This agreement kept over 10,000 acres of these artificial wetlands available for the period when most of the migration occurs. The Nature Conservancy hoped then to make this a recurring program as last year millions of migrating water birds took advantage of them.

Whether this program can continue, however, is not clear as increasing state restrictions on water use and the diminishing amount of water in the Sacramento River may force farmers to revert to their earlier methods of burning rice fields at the end of the growing season rather than flooding them. Under these conditions, it's unclear that the Pacific Flyway can continue to support the migration numbers that it has in past years. This February, for example, is the second driest on record in California. The recent winter storms did increase the size of the Sierra snow packs somewhat, although they are still only about ½ of the long term average. We can only hope that the drought there ends soon.

## GIVE BACK TO THE BIRD CLUB!

Nothing says "love" like a year of birds. Give your loved one a year of joy with a gift membership to the Evanston North Shore Bird Club. Your membership supports our exciting program nights, field trips, newsletter, Christmas Counts and more. Plus it's tax deductible! For more information or to purchase a gift membership, call Libby Hill at 847-475-2096, visit <http://www.ensbc.org/join.html> or email [info@ensbc.org](mailto:info@ensbc.org).

### AND DON'T FORGET TO RENEW!

The ENSBC membership starts April 1, 2015. Renewals can be made on line at <http://www.ensbc.org/join.html> or by emailing [info@ensbc.org](mailto:info@ensbc.org). Membership renewals are also sent by mail or email so keep a look out for yours!



Green Heron  
Photo by Arden Davidson



# A VIEW TO THE PAST— WAUKEGAN HARBOR'S HIDDEN GEM

By Libby Hill and Eleonora di Liscia

Peering east towards Lake Michigan over the bluffs at Bowen Park in Waukegan, one overlooks a vista no longer common in our cities, a window into the past with such great potential for the future that it almost makes your heart hurt.

On the bluff, with a view towards Lake Michigan, is Bowen Park. Located at 19800 N. Sheridan Road, it comprises 61 acres of woods and ravines including the beautiful steep high quality Glen Flora ravine. A stream, crossed by a picturesque bridge, runs through Bowen Park on to Lake Michigan. Children at Jane Addams Hull House summer camp played upon these grounds. The Waukegan Park District eventually acquired the site in the 1960s.

Looking east below the Bowen bluffs is a swathe of trees and wetlands. The tree area, belonging to the Illinois Department of Transportation, was intended to extend Chicago's Lake Shore Drive to Milwaukee. The wetland comprises a ComEd right of way and hosts a variety of nesting ducks and very high quality wetland flora.

Beyond the wetland, directly to the east, lies property occupied by Johns Manville (JM) and beyond that, the northern portion of the Waukegan Dunal Area, a delight for birders and nature lovers alike.

Fortunately, the Waukegan Harbor Area Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) is overseeing the restoration of sites within the Waukegan Harbor Area of Concern (AOC)

and the Extended Area of Concern. The Extended Area ranges from the middle of the Dead River in Illinois Beach State Park to about 22nd Street in North Chicago. Formed in the 1990's, CAG's member organizations include corporate, governmental, shipping, environmental, and public representatives. The group's vision includes fostering "a sense of responsibility for restoring and maintaining" the AOC's ecological integrity, as per their website (<http://waukeganharborcag.com/index.html>).

Anyone with concerns about the area can attend CAG's monthly public meetings at Bowen Park's Lilac Cottage to offer input and ask questions.

CAG's ongoing restoration activities are currently funded by a large Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant. The grant covers 31 acres of the Glen Flora Ravine and bluffs in Bowen Park, and the full Waukegan Dunal Area and Swimming Beach.

The Waukegan Dunal Area has undergone extensive removal of phragmites and other invasive species. In Bowen Park, grant contractors also removed invasive species and daylighted to remove non-native and some native trees, including maples, ashes and other trees that were not high quality.

Re-seeding in both areas was carefully done with a native mix from local sources. The Waukegan Park District agreed to stop mowing along the forested ravine

edges in Bowen Park to create more shrubland edge habitat. So many native species came up the next year that it reduced the amount needed to further reseed. Last fall, migrant warblers began using the newly created shrubland edge by the droves.

Neighbors abutting Bowen Park have become interested in the project, some even participating in Citizen Science water monitoring studies on their Glen Flora Ravine properties.

The large industrial portion of land east of Bowen Park and the Metra tracks contains the Johns Manville Superfund Site, where cleanup, capping and reseeded is currently under way. The JM site will soon be open for future development discussions with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the property's owner. CAG has had real success in partnering with corporate landowners in restoring their lands.

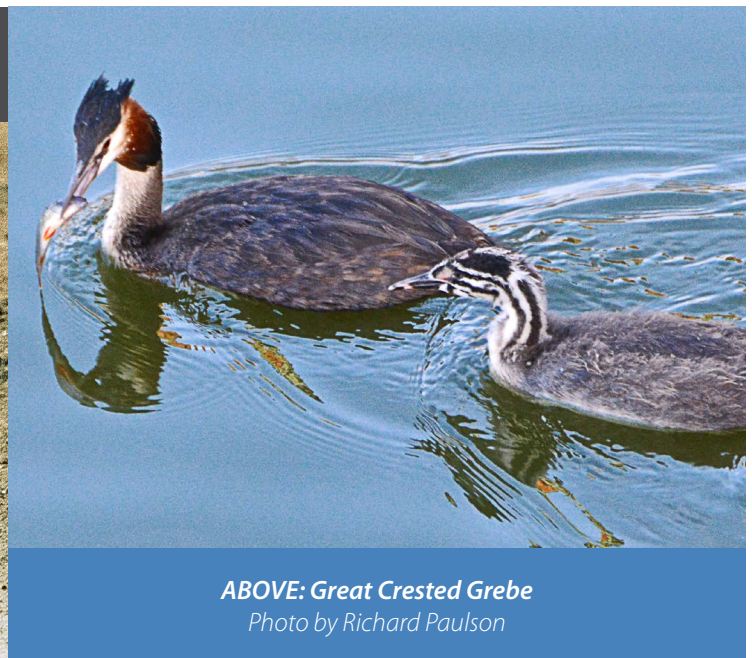
The entire area has the potential to become an exciting natural attraction, the kind of place you wish you could travel back in time to see. It's high quality habitat that's hard to find in northeastern Illinois.

"This is our chunk of land that has remnant features from 10,000 years ago, and it's pretty exciting," said Susie Schreiber, Chair of CAG.

**BELOW: Red Knot, Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling**  
Photo by Lloyd Davidson



**ABOVE: Great Crested Grebe**  
Photo by Richard Paulson



## IN MEMORIAM: MURIEL SMITH

Life Member Muriel Smith passed away October 15, 2014 in Wheaton, IL at age 92. According to her son, Brian Glass, Muriel was instrumental in founding the DuPage Birding Club and the Illinois Ornithological Society. She did birding surveys for the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, especially West Chicago Prairie and participated in many ENSBC Christmas Bird Counts as well as assisting the U.S. Geological Survey. She is also acknowledged as a contributor to the Peterson Field Guide Series book on warblers.

According to Brian, Muriel's interest in shorebird identification started when "she and I were on a trip to the North Chicago/Waukegan lake front and were looking at a bunch of peeps on a little pond at the top of the beach and she noted some identification questions that arose. She never quit studying them after that."

Brian noted an email from Eric Walters to the Illinois birding community stating: "Muriel's field work led to recognizing the differing flank markings of Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitchers, which were used by Illinois birders to help identify these accurately by 1986."

"A lot of birders have commented to me on what a great friend and mentor she was and how generous she was in sharing her knowledge, especially with beginning birders," Brian said.

Joel Greenberg remembered birding with Muriel in the late 1960s and early 1970s. "Muriel was very helpful to young birders and was always a joy to bird with. She was an astute observer who discerned field marks that were not emphasized in the field guides of the day," Joel said.

A celebration of Muriel's life will be held at Anderson Auditorium, Wyndemere Senior Living Community, in Wheaton on Saturday, May 2, at 10 AM. Prior to the event, a bird walk in Muriel's memory will take place at West DuPage Woods Forest Preserve (Elsen's Hill) at the Gary's Mill Road entrance.

"The time of the walk is not yet decided, but like all good spring birds walks it will start as early as possible, probably shortly after sunrise," Brian said.



**Muriel Smith**

*Muriel Smith photo provided by Brian Glass*

## IN MEMORIAM: RALPH EISEMAN



**Ralph Eiseman**

The birding community also lost Ralph Eiseman on November 8, 2014 at age 79.

Jeff Sanders remembers: "In the 60s and 70s, Charlie Clark and I—when birding the Chicago lakefront in fall and winter—would often run into Ralph sitting in his brother-in-law's cab. Ralph was scanning the lakefront for gulls and ducks with his binoculars. He borrowed the cab on weekends to make some extra money. He was always cheerful and enjoying himself."

Ralph once extolled the virtues of using radios for birding to Birdwatcher's Digest. Ralph had successfully used radios in locating a Blue Grosbeak in Illinois Beach State Park.

## ENSBC ELECTIONS

Every April, ENSBC elects a slate of officers. Thanks to their dedication, ENSBC offers many fine programs and field trips as well as our much respected Christmas Bird Count. But we are always looking for new ideas. If you are interested in any position, please contact Gary Hantsbarger, ghantsbarger@yahoo.com or 847-374-8022, to put in your nomination. The current slate of nominees is:

**PRESIDENT:**  
GARY HANTSBARGER

**VICE-PRESIDENT:**  
JENNIFER SCHMIDT

**TREASURER:**  
JOHN HOCKMAN

**SECRETARY:**  
NANCY HALLIDAY

**CORRESPONDING SECRETARY:**  
OPEN

**PROGRAM CHAIR:**  
LIBBY HILL

**FIELD TRIP CHAIR:**  
LIBBY HILL

**ASSISTANT FIELD TRIP CHAIR:**  
DAVID JOHNSON

**MEMBERSHIP CHAIR:**  
KATHY STOHRER

**BIRD CALLS EDITOR:**  
ELEONORA DI LISCIA

**CONSERVATION CHAIR:**  
LLOYD DAVIDSON

**PUBLICITY:**  
PHYLLIS REYNOLDS

**ARCHIVIST:**  
LOIS SHELGREEN



**Red-shouldered Hawk Taking Off**  
*Photo by Lloyd Davidson*