

# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

February 2022



Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

## *Bird-friendly Evanston – Working to Make a Bird-safe City*

*by Libby Hill*

The latest news about birds and buildings estimates that one billion birds are killed annually flying into windows! To birds, the reflections of trees and plants appear to be a safe haven, especially if they are fleeing predators or navigating foggy or stormy weather. Songbird populations have reportedly declined 30% since 1970.

Various cities have adopted building regulations to create a bird-safe community. San Francisco, Toronto, New York and Madison all have passed ordinances that require new home and building construction to be bird-safe. Chicago is integrating such regulations into its sustainability construction standards. Cook County requires new buildings in unincorporated areas to be bird-safe. The U.S. government requires all new federal buildings to be bird-safe.

What about Evanston? As of now, the city does not have regulations to ensure that bird-safe buildings are constructed here. Staff changes have stalled the revisions in the green building code that would specify criteria to make a building safe for birds. Meanwhile, a group of Evanston bird advocates has stepped into the void, creating Bird-Friendly Evanston to help developers find solutions until a revised code is adopted.



When a new office or residential building is proposed, the developer must go before the Design and Project Review Committee. The committee reviews issues such as parking, traffic implications, site details and drainage. The committee also now asks developers to include bird-safe features in their designs.

Bird-Friendly Evanston often meets with developers even before they go to the committee. Developers have been very receptive to meetings and to BFE's suggestions. For example, when Burger King announced it was closing its Clark Street restaurant across from Northwestern, members of BFE figured a new building would replace it. Sure enough, it didn't take long for a proposal to surface. BFE wrote the developers asking if the group would be interested in meeting about bird-safe features that could be incorporated in the building. Useful conversations are ongoing.

BFE looks at the amount and reflectivity of glass, the types of railings, whether landscaping elements are reflected in the glass, the effects of green roofs, whether there are see-through corners or walkways and other design issues, then meets with the developer to discuss accommodations to mitigate any concerns.

Other prominent examples: Northlight Theater is aiming to be bird-friendly. The YWCA installed bird-friendly glass and agreed to watch for bird collisions to see how it was working. So far, BFE has worked with developers on 22 Evanston buildings, and developers have incorporated many of the group's recommendations.

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## ENSBC Holds 61st Annual Christmas Bird Count

by John Leonard

The Evanston North Shore Bird Club sponsored its 61st annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Sunday, December 26, 2021. The CBC is the premier community science project, running now for 122 years. We send our data to a central repository at the National Audubon Society, and one can easily view historical trends at their website (<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/where-have-all-birds-gone>).

The COVID-19 pandemic was at the top of everyone's mind again this year, and counters typically were fully vaccinated. 52 dedicated birders in 10 sub-areas enjoyed mild weather for the fourth year in a row, noting 78 species in our 15-mile diameter count circle. This was well above our average of 71 seen annually since 2000. We collectively walked 121 miles and drove another 189 to observe birds in daylight hours. In addition, several participants set out before dawn or after dusk to find owls, both Eastern Screech (8) and Great Horned (14) Owls.



*Townsend's Solitaire, Moraine Hills State Park, Jan. 2022, by Stephen Hurst*

After allowing two days for coordinators to pull their numbers together, John Leonard presented the spreadsheet on Zoom for the excitement-building countdown, starting with, of course, European Starling and ending with semi-rarities. Putting observations of each species in historical context, along with trend graphs of all our prior data, interests all participants and is especially appealing in the later stage of the countdown when less common and even surprising finds are revealed.

Our new leader of the Northwestern U/Gillson areas, Simon Tolzman, organized a group that came through in a big way along the lake. They found record numbers of both Common and Red-throated Loons as well as huge

numbers of White-winged Scoters and a pair of Black Scoters, among other unique waterfowl sightings. Vlad Nevirkovets spotted an Eastern Phoebe. This species, often the first flycatcher to arrive in spring and last to depart in fall, may be staying longer due to climate change. Open water may have contributed to the record number of Belted Kingfishers seen. We had one last year for the first time ever on the count.

Our single Ruby-crowned Kinglet was a big surprise, as Golden-crowned Kinglets dominate this time of year. Record numbers of Red-bellied and Red-headed



*Tree covered in hoar frost near the Des Plaines River by Andy Kimmel, on CBC*

Woodpeckers were found, maybe in part due to abundance of dead and dying ash trees. Red-headed woodpeckers are doing especially well at Ryerson Conservation Area. Winter Wrens were abundant this year in our count circle, as they have been on other Chicago area counts (15 vs prior record of 6!). Common Redpoll was the star of the show, with 529 seen, 50% more than prior record in 2015. On the other hand, big misses included Wood Duck, Snow Bunting, Rough-legged Hawk, White-crowned Sparrow, Tufted Titmouse and Northern Harrier. American Crows were hit especially hard by the West Nile virus that began here in 2001, but their numbers may be on a slow rise as we saw 173 this year, 97 last year (but 4,576 in 2000).

Possibly due to the increased number of feeder counters the past two years, we added many Red-breasted Nuthatches and only the second location for Red-winged Blackbird! Thanks to Tim Joyce of WBU Glenview for spreading the word about our feeder effort and to Joel Greenberg for collecting the data. In all, we counted 17,900 birds! Hopefully we'll be able to hold a normal count next year and recruit a few more participants both in the field and at feeders!

### 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count – February 18-21!

In this four-day event, birders around the world count and report details of birds where they live. Data is submitted online and used in scientific research. To join this fun event, go to

[How to Participate – Great Backyard Bird Count.](#)

Glass is not the only feature that threatens birds. Lighting, especially during spring and fall migration, attracts birds. A number of cities have adopted Lights Out Programs in which buildings voluntarily turn off lights from 11 p.m. to dawn during migrations. Bright lights disorient birds, drawing them to buildings and resulting in building collisions and deaths. Birds use up energy they need for migration and breeding, flying around in confusion and eventually becoming exhausted and unable to dodge predators and other threats, like glass.

Tall buildings with bright lights and lots of glass are obvious threats to birds. But even small buildings, condos, apartment buildings and single-family homes use glass and artificial lighting at night that can disrupt birds. Birds migrate along the lakefront, and then spread out into the Evanston area to rest and forage early in the morning. Migrating birds are often seen refueling in back yards, as well as wild areas.

Evanston residents —and those of other cities—can take steps to make their homes and businesses bird-safe. A single hawk decal glued to a window does not work to deter a bird. Various window treatments are available, from inexpensive home-made designs to store-bought solutions. And excess outdoor safety lighting, for example, can be replaced by timers.

Bird-Friendly Evanston recommends this website to help residents make their homes, offices, schools and places of worship bird-safe: [Solutions to Birds Hitting Windows & Glass Buildings | ABC \(abcbirds.org\)](https://www.abcbirds.org/)

*Anyone who finds an injured bird should call Chicago Bird Collision Monitors at, 773-988-1867.  
If you need help with a bird collision problem, email [birdfriendlyevanston@gmail.com](mailto:birdfriendlyevanston@gmail.com).*

*This article was excerpted from a piece that appeared in the December 19, 2021 issue of the Evanston Roundtable.  
It was in response to a tasteless TV ad making light of birds crashing into windows.*

## Conservation Corner: Urgent Breaking News!

The design and location of the proposed totally glass Carvana Car Vending Machine Tower across from Harms Woods Nature Preserve in Skokie, could have catastrophic consequences for birds, both local and migratory.

The Skokie Board of Trustees will be the final decision maker. They have an open field to reject the zoning amendment that must be approved for the Tower to move forward or to reject Carvana's project plans in their entirety. The Trustees will take action on this during the February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Make your voice heard!

Submit your written comments to the Skokie Board of Trustees via [publiccomments@skokie.org](mailto:publiccomments@skokie.org).

Copy your correspondence to Chicago Bird Collision Monitors at [info@birdmonitors.net](mailto:info@birdmonitors.net).

Sign the petition at <https://www.change.org/ProtectSkokieBirds>



*Common Redpoll, Jan. 2022.  
by Stephen Hurst*

## About our Board....

At our April program meeting, we will vote on a slate of officers and proposed by-laws changes, both of which will be announced in an eblast in March. We welcome suggestions for Board Positions, particularly Vice-President, for which the nominating committee has no current candidate. Membership renewals will be sent out in late April.





## Field Trips Comin' Up!

Check <https://www.ensbc.org> for additional trips.

**Friday, March 11: Air Station Prairie Woodcocks!** -- Come see the spectacular aerial displays of the American Woodcock in Glenview at dusk! We may even spot a woodcock on the ground. Meet on the deck of the interpretive center at 6:45 pm. The parking lot is across the street (Compass Road). Leader: John Leonard.

**Wednesday, April 20: Air Station Prairie and Techy North** -- Meet at 8 a.m. at the west side of the parking lot across the street (Compass Road) from the Interpretive Center. We will look for early migrants including shorebirds, especially Wilson's Snipe, there and at Techy North. Leader: John Leonard.

**Wednesday, May 4: Ryerson Woods** -- Meet at 8 am at Brushwood Center Parking lot for spring migration walk. Leader: John Leonard.

**Thursday, May 5: Perkins Woods.** Look for warblers, other migrants and a great display of spring wildflowers. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the corner of Ewing Avenue and Grant Street, Evanston. Park along Ewing. Leaders: John Bates and Josh Engel.

**Friday, May 6: Skokie Lagoons.** Expect a great list of warbler species. Meet at 7:30 am at Erickson Woods Forest Preserve, Winnetka. Turn north into the parking lot from Willow Rd. just east of Edens Expressway. Leader: TBD.

## Programs You Won't Want to Miss! (Zoom)

**February 22: Ben Goldfarb, "Dam It: How Beavers Can Save the Planet."** In *Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter*, environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb reveals that our concept of healthy waterways has been distorted by the fur trade that once trapped out millions of beavers in North America. The consequences were profound: ponds drained, wetlands dried up and vital habitat lost for species from salmon to swans. Today, a growing coalition of "Beaver Believers"— scientists, ranchers and passionate citizens — recognizes that ecosystems with beavers are far healthier than those without.



**March 22: Jason Weckstein, "Are Species Real? The Role of Species Definitions in Biology and How Different Concepts of Species Affect Your Life List!"** As birders, we may think we know what is meant by the word species. They are how we convey what we learn as biologists and what we see as birders. Yet, it turns out that defining species isn't all that simple. Jason Weckstein, Associate Curator of Ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Drexel University, will talk about how species concepts differ in their utility, give examples of how they are applied, and indicate what they tell us about the birds we all love.

**April 26: Josh Engel, "Understanding Bird Migration."** Spring and fall are prime birding times in the Chicago area, thanks to the vast number of birds migrating through. But how does migration work? Josh will try to untangle some of the complexities of bird migration: how birds migrate; how they know when and where to go; and how some species make astounding migrations, some twice annually. He will also explain how eBird can help you better understand migration and inform your own birding.

### In Memoriam—Carla La Rochelle

Carla grew up on a farm in Holton, Michigan. Prior to raising a family, she was a journalist in Michigan and an elementary teacher in Evanston. Carla and her husband Jim, a past president of ENSBC, were married for 55 years. During their retirement years, she and Jim volunteered with Earthwatch, assisting with scientific research related to climate change, wildlife and ecosystems, and archeology in Wyoming, Maine, Texas, Nova Scotia, France, and Italy. They also served with Global Volunteers in Montana, Poland, Costa Rica, Mexico, St. Lucia and Peru, helping needy communities. Carla died November 15, 2021, at the age of 78, due to complications from COVID.

*An early (or late?) Hermit Thrush at a birdbath in Evanston in January. by Lloyd Davidson*



### Welcome New Members!

Linda Cames	Chicago
Sharon Goodman	Evanston
Nancy Hollander	Skokie
Maureen McDonnell & Patricia Sugrue	Evanston
Joab Oberlander	Wilmette

*And a special welcome to our newest member, Lucy Lark Engel, born December 27, 2021, to our Publicity Chair Amanda Engel and Josh Engel, our go-to speaker and field trip guide.*