



# COMPASS

*Navigating the world of birds and nature*

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2005

## Birding America VII March 18, 2006 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. North Park University, 3225 W. Foster Ave Chicago, IL

Discover great places, great people and great birds at Chicago Audubon Society's Birding America VII. Whether you're planning a birding trip to the North, East, West or closer to home, Birding America will give you the inside information for the most rewarding birding experience. Experts from around the country will talk about birding in their areas and help you plan your trip around highlight birds and seasonal variations. These sessions will give you a chance to preview areas you've always wanted to visit and find out about new ones. As before, Birding America will also include skill-building workshops to help you become a better

birder.

Birding America VII sessions will include a special presentation on the Ivory-billed woodpecker - Found at Last? We will have local areas represented: Kankakee (Hennepin-Hopper area), Chicago's IBAs (Important Birding Areas). Further destinations might be: Owling in Minnesota, Hawks of Hawk Mountain, Birds of the boreal forest of North America and birding in Costa Rica. Skill building workshops range from making your backyard bird friendly, to digiscoping, to identifying flight calls.

Throughout the day, vendors will have booths set

up to offer birding books, field equipment, clothing and other useful birding-related merchandise. (Chicago Audubon will also have door prizes to give away at the end of the program).

Registration for Birding America VII is \$40 for National Audubon and Chicago Audubon members, \$50 for non-members. The fee includes all sessions. Lunch is available for \$12. (A late fee registration of \$50 applies after March 4 and at the door, subject to space availability. Lunch for late registrants may not be available). To register or for more information, contact the Chicago Audubon office at (773) 539-6793. □

## THE YEAR AT LAKE CALUMET

by Walter Marcisz

As 2005 draws to a close, it seems an appropriate time to review some of the events that have occurred this year in the Lake Calumet region of southeastern Chicago.

The Calumet region has long been appreciated by birders and nature lovers for its extensive wetlands and other wildlife habitats, but on the flipside Calumet has also long served as a site for heavy industry. During much of the past century, steel industry and garbage dumps have dominated the Calumet landscape, with predictable impacts on the environment. The steel industry is now much reduced in the area, with new industries such as the Ford Manufacturing Campus taking its place.

The garbage dumps too are closing. On June 8, 2005 the final blow to Calumet garbage dump expansion may have been dealt when the Chicago City Council unanimously passed a 20-year extension of Chicago's landfill moratorium sponsored by 10th Ward Alderman John Pope. In addition, the Chicago Departments of Environment and Planning & Development are currently meeting with Waste Management to finalize details of plans for closure and end use of the CID Landfill, one of the last active dumps remaining in the area.

Over the past five years the City of Chicago has acquired a number of critical habitat areas for its Calumet Open Space Reserve, including Hegewisch Marsh, Hyde Lake Wetland, Indian Ridge Marsh, and Van Vliissingen Prairie, with plans to build a Calumet Environmental Center at Hegewisch Marsh (perhaps as early as 2007).

Lake Calumet itself, however, still remains under the jurisdiction of the Illinois International Port District (IIPD). The east shore of Lake Calumet has been fenced off for many years now, but early in 2005 the IIPD dealt another crushing blow to Chicago area birders by fencing off the west shore of Lake Calumet almost completely restricting access for birders, all in the name of Homeland Security, of course. The only real silver lining here is that IIPD continues to grant birders access to Harborside International Golf Course (clubhouse balcony only) during season (April- October), and also that IIPD continues to maintain wetland habitat on the Harborside peninsula and grassland habitat on the golf course grounds.

Illinois state endangered/threatened species observed at the Harborside peninsula wetland in 2005 include Least Bittern, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Common Moorhen and Forster's Tern. The Harborside peninsula also attracted numerous migrant shorebird species in 2005, including American Avocet, White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope, and the golf course grasslands attracted summering Savannah Sparrows, Dickcissels, and Eastern Meadowlarks.

In 2005 the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago continued to refuse to grant birders access to its Calumet Water Treatment Plant, again in the name of Homeland Security. Many birders consider the Plant to be the best spot for migrant shorebirds in the Chicago area.

In August 2005, the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) published papers on population trends and nesting ecology of the Calumet Black-

crowned Night-Heron colony (INHS Bulletin Volume 37, Articles 3 and 4). These papers, based on the results of studies conducted in 2002 and 2003, are available from the INHS website: <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu>

Observations from this year suggest that the drought of 2005 had a profound effect on the Calumet Black-crowned Night-Heron colony. The Calumet night-herons nest in reeds low to the water, and the drought-induced evaporation left their nests without the protection from predators that deeper water normally provides. As a result, nests were heavily predated in 2005, and many (perhaps most) of the nests were unsuccessful.

But what is bad for one species is often good for others. Low water levels caused by drought conditions in 2005 eventually resulted in the creation of extensive mud flats at Lake Calumet's Deadstick Pond and Big Marsh. Birders know well that mud flats are a magnet for migrant shorebirds, and Deadstick & Big Marsh were just that this year. Shorebirds seen at either or both sites in 2005 include Western Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope and Red-necked Phalarope.

One thing is certain-a visit to the Calumet region is always a mixed bag. You may see anything from the beautifully successful wetland restoration along Indian Creek north of 126th Street to the herd of grazing goats (administered by Illinois EPA) on the closed Paxton II Landfill south of Big Marsh. All in all, the Calumet region remains an area rich in history and with great potential for the future. □

## The October 15th CAS Art Party

At the risk of abusing a very old cliché, a splendid time was had by all. Everyone I spoke to at the party and afterwards appeared to consider the evening a success. We were treated to some exceptional photography, sculpture, paintings and drawings. Everyone enjoyed the food and drinks, and several of the guests were very complimentary to me regarding the guitar music.

The members and board of the Chicago Audubon Society would like to express their appreciation to Sharon Parmet for organizing the whole event, to the artists who treated us to their creations, to the staff at Lill Street Art Center, who did a superb job of displaying all the pieces, and most of all, to everyone who attended the Art Party. □

-George Sawyn





# The Photo Corner

## Red-tailed Hawk

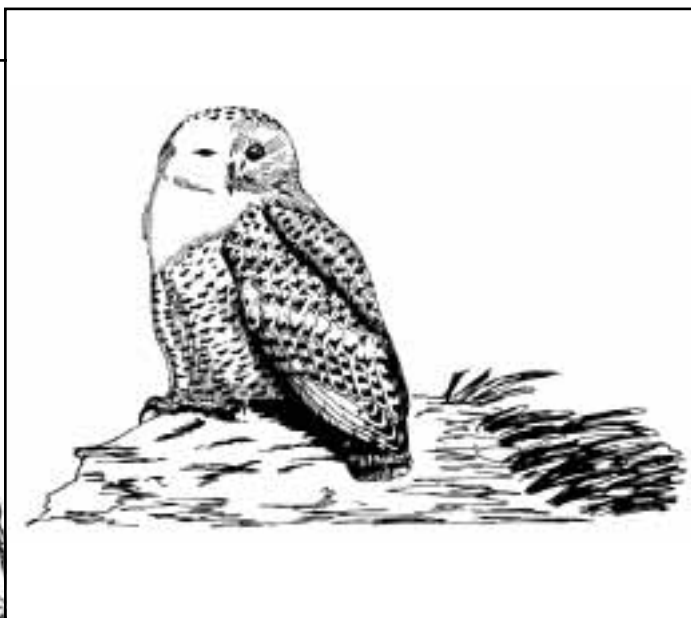
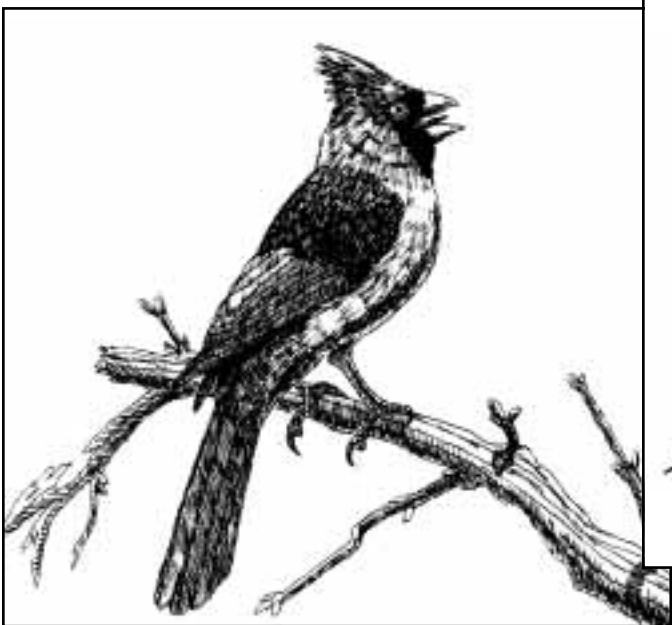
This Red-tailed Hawk comes to the Compass courtesy of **Jerry Hug**, a local photographer. The photo was taken at the Prairie Lakes Community Center in Des Plaines, Illinois.



Illustration by  
**Kirsten Munson**



Illustrations by  
**Steven D'Amato**



## Two Short Poems by Marian Byrnes

### Warning

A mother duck is nesting near  
a high rise building. She shows no fear.

It's a warning from Gaia, under stress  
we've robbed the duck of her wilderness

We must look back at warnings we crossed.  
We can gain wisdom from what the duck lost.

### Gaia's Way

This very special Spring in Chicago,  
Gaia is creating an Earth Manifesto.  
Wild grasses and flowers grow like Jack's beanstalk,  
three or four inches every day.

Gaia wants to reclaim what is hers,  
So she shows us what she is able to do,  
to perform magic for this tired old world  
If we would get out of her wonderful way.

How can we do that?

## COMPASS

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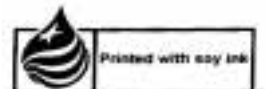
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# “Lord God” What a Read!

by: D.L. Darnell

I remember almost not answering a telephone call one night several months ago as my wife and I were already in bed and it was late. This was early in the year, in the days before the news broke about the re-discovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The call was from a neighbor that we were just getting to know, Gerrit, a well-spoken man in his 60s. Gerrit had spent much of his professional life as a cinematographer, occasionally contracted to work on Hollywood produced on-location shoots, and, when he was lucky, on “wildlife” shoots, which he really loved to do. Anyhow, because of the late hour of the call I at first thought something was wrong, an emergency of some kind. But the excited gentleman on the other end of the line quickly spilled out what was on his mind. His gush went something like this: “I understand it all now. The old forests! The dead trees! It’s where they get their food. Where they lived. I just finished this book. You’ve got to read it. It’s called *The Race To Save The Lord God Bird*. Sorry to call so late.”

Of course, I was glad I picked-up the phone. Now it’s my turn to gush.

If you’ve ever thought about buying just the right book to give to a neighbor -- or daughter or nephew, or cousin or uncle or grandchild -- with the express intention of introducing them to the world of conservation, then, *The Race To Save The Lord God Bird* might be it. If ever there was one book that succinctly and powerfully advanced the mission of the Audubon Society -- “to promote the understanding and appreciation of nature, and to aid in conservation and restoration of our natural ecosystems” -- then this is the book.

Although Jerome Jackson’s *The Search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker*, and Tim Gallagher’s, *The Grail Bird*, are absolute “must” reads for bird lovers, Phillip Hoose’s *Lord God* book -- based on the Cornell-initiated and Audubon-supported 1930s–1940s “race” to save the Ivory-billed Woodpecker from extinction -- seems geared more to the general public. The book weaves a compelling lesson in conservation that any mildly intelligent human being over the age of 11 will understand. And it does so without sounding at all preachy. This book is as edge-of-seat engaging -- gut-wrenching at times -- as any book about nature can possibly be.

According to the publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, *The Race To Save The Lord God Bird* is recommended reading for ages “12 and up.” Their website [www.fsgkidsbooks.com](http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com) categorizes the non-fiction book as “juvenile literature” and lists awards, science and otherwise, the book has won since its release in 2004. That said, I highly suspect that this quick-read has been indulged-in by more adults than adolescents over the last year.

In all fairness, Jackson’s *In Search of The Ivory-billed Woodpecker* contains a motherlode of historical information on the Ivory-bill and details his own personal “years-long” search for the bird (he “believes” he saw it). Jackson’s effort may be the most complete and well-researched volume on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker ever published.

And, if you somehow missed the news, the largest woodpecker to ever live in North



America, a species that hasn’t had a “confirmed” sighting in the U.S. in 60 years, was “re-discovered” alive in Arkansas in April of last year, although the sighting wasn’t made public until April of 2005. So you’ll definitely want to also read Tim Gallagher’s exciting first-hand account of his 2004 sighting of the bird in his *The Grail Bird*, published this year.

However, as far as our Audubon Society mission goes, Hoose’s extraordinary storytelling skill makes *The Race To Save Lord God Bird* an easy-to-grasp masterpiece on the importance of paying attention to nature, to conservation. The book includes haunting close-up photos of a nestling Ivory-bill hopping up a search team member’s arm, perched on his head! The photos alone are worth the 20-dollar retail price of the book.

If you’re one of those types who needs a “local” connection to get excited about a story of this nature, think on this: The southernmost tip of our state, an area where Ivory-bills were known to have lived in the 19th century, probably isn’t much more than 150 miles from the northern tract of the recent Arkansas sightings! That’s “as the woodpecker flies,” of course. And if that’s not close enough for you, how’s this: by the same “direct air” standard, Illinois is roughly 60 miles from northeast Arkansas! For perspective, that’s about the same distance the Chicago Audubon Society Office is to Kankakee River State Park, where we go to see Mockingbirds and the Tufted Titmouse -- albeit, we don’t fly there in a straight line.

Experts might argue that our southern Illinois forests and cypress swamps are now too degraded or fragmented to hold a pair of Ivory-bills. But keep in mind, until April of this year, leading ornithologists thought the big woodpecker was extinct; and they surely weren’t expecting the species to re-appear north of the 1940s sightings, which it did. So it can’t hurt to at least daydream of the possibility that a young “Lord God” bird might forage its way up to Alexander or Johnson counties. Wouldn’t that be nice.

Do read *The Race To Save The Lord God Bird*, and then pass the book along -- preferably, to someone who is not yet a member of the choir. It just might open a door, might help someone to “understand it all now,” just like Gerrit. □

## The Morton Arboretum Ornithology

**FORM + FUNCTION + FLIGHT = BIRD**  
(Previously named Introduction to Ornithology)  
Carol Fialkowski, Arboretum Instructor

How do feathers, bones and muscles leap into the air and stay aloft? This introductory course will cover the basics of life as a bird. Learn how a bird senses the world, how a feather is constructed, how a bird manages heat and cold, and other elements of life on the wing.

Ornithology Certificate Requirement  
Naturalist Certificate Elective (15 hours)  
15 Teacher CPDUs  
@O630. 5 Tuesdays, Jan. 17 - Feb. 14; 9:00 am – noon.  
Room E, Thornhill.  
\$161 (\$134 members). Limit 24.

### BIRDS OF ILLINOIS: WINTER

Denis Kania, Restoration Ecologist, St. Charles Park District

Being able to identify birds by sight and call is critical to both amateur birdwatchers and professional researchers. Learn the methods and techniques of correctly identifying Illinois’ winter birds. The majority of this class will be outdoors, so please dress appropriately. Some time will also be spent indoors reviewing daily checklists and learning calls and field identification marks. The use of field guides and binoculars will also be discussed. Please dress for the weather.

Ornithology Certificate Requirement  
Naturalist Certificate Elective (18 hours)  
@O604. 5 Sundays, Jan. 29 - Feb. 26; 8:00 -11:30 am.  
Room B, Research Center.  
\$165 (\$135 members). Limit 20.

### NEW: ICE and EAGLES

Walt Anderson, Visual Echoes Nature Photography,  
Willard Clay, Nature Photographer,  
Gloria Dobry, Naturalist

A winter wonderland of ice, stone, and bald eagles are just waiting to be observed by birders, or captured by photographers. Gloria will outline the bird’s annual migratory patterns and work with you to sharpen your observation skills. Will and Walt will assist you in catching the delicate, theatrical, and wondrous winter scenes of eagles and ice. Bus transportation and lunch included. Please meet at Parking 19, the Motorcoach will begin boarding at 6:30 am for a 7 am departure. Please dress for the weather.

Photography Certificate Elective (6 hours), Ornithology  
Field Experience, Naturalist Certificate Elective (6 hours).  
\_P599. Saturday, Jan. 28; 7 am – 4 pm. \$99 (members \$89).  
Limit 20.

### ORNITHOLOGY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Whether you are an experienced birder or a novice, the Ornithology Certificate Program will give you the knowledge you need to enrich your birding adventures.

Through lectures, labs, and fieldwork, the program leads you in an organized study of avian biology, behavior, classification, conservation, and identification. Upon completion, you will be able to identify over 100 birds common to the Chicago region and understand their role in our ecosystems. You will learn how avian populations are managed and will be better informed about conservation concerns.

Required courses in the certificate are listed below. Courses do not have prerequisites, and series classes are not sequential. However, if you are a beginner, it is advisable to start with *Form + Function + Flight = Bird* and the *Birds of Illinois* series. The certificate may be completed in one year or more.

- *Form + Function + Flight = Bird* (formerly Introduction to Ornithology)
- *Birds of Illinois: Winter, Spring, Summer, & Fall*
- Behavioral Ecology: I & II
- Conservation Issues
- *Creatures of the Air* (formerly Systematics & Taxonomy)
- Field Experience

Students must participate in three field trips that highlight regional avian phenomena. These field trips are offered in accordance with seasonal bird activity.

All certificate class textbooks are available at the Arboretum Store.

### Application and Registration:

For further information, a complete certificate description, course listing, and online registration; visit [www.mortonarb.org](http://www.mortonarb.org) or contact the Registrar’s office at 630-719-2468. □

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Stewardship Workdays

At the Skokie Lagoons: Saturday, November 12 and December 10 at 10:00 a.m.

Chicago Audubon conducts regular monthly workdays at the Skokie Lagoons on the second Saturday of every month. Activities include buckthorn cutting, brushpile burning and other management activities. Meet at the Tower Road parking lot, east of the lagoon bridge.

For further information call Jerry Garden at (773) 545-4632, or e-mail him at [jerrygarden@sprynet.com](mailto:jerrygarden@sprynet.com)

## CAS Programs

"Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness and the Quest to Protect 9 Million Acres"

Thursday, November 17, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago

Enjoy a breathtaking journey through the famous redrock country of Southern Utah. (See article with full description below.) □

## Montrose Point Workdays

(Editor's note: It is likely that this issue of the Compass may not have arrived in time for you to plan on this event. However, it was decided to include this article anyway so that readers are made aware of these workdays, which will resume next March.)

Montrose Point, home of the Magic Hedge, needs your help. We are conducting monthly workdays the first Saturday of the month March through November. This is a unique opportunity to garden on the lakefront as we work on establishing native vegetation and removing invasive species like blackthorn and burdock. Our goals are to create an environment that will enhance the health and well being of birds that use the point during migration and during nesting season, to enhance opportunities for bird watchers, and provide opportunities for the public to learn about natural areas and the importance and beauty of native landscape.

The nest workday is scheduled for November 5th 9AM to 12PM. We will be weeding and mulching an area in the hedge where new shrubs were planted this spring. We will also be cutting invasive shrubs out of the hedge to make room for another round of planting next spring.

Exciting new developments at Montrose Point include a large area of the meadow that was planted with a fantastic collection of native prairie plants last fall and a collection of 10 different species of shrubs that were planted in the Magic hedge this spring.

Directions: Meet at the "Magic Hedge" located on Montrose Ave., east of Lake Shore Drive. Drive east on Montrose Ave. towards the Lake and as the road turns north take the first right by the bait shop. Continue to the nature area on the left, just before the harbor parking lot as the road starts to curve right around the harbor.

For additional information, contact David Painter by email at [Dvdpaint@yahoo.com](mailto:Dvdpaint@yahoo.com), or by phone at 773-935-1387. □

## November Program: Wild Utah – America's Redrock Wilderness and The Quest to Protect 9 Million Acres

by Marci Buettgen

Pull your chair closer to the crackling fireplace, take a sip of hot chocolate, and enjoy a breathtaking journey through the famous redrock country of Southern Utah during our CAS November program, "Wild Utah - America's Redrock Wilderness and The Quest to Protect 9 Million Acres," at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago, on Thursday, November 17th, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

This multi-media slide show, featuring stunning images by noted wilderness photographers and the voice of Pulitzer Prize winning author Wallace Stegner, will be presented by our Guest Speaker, Bob Brister, Outreach Coordinator of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA).

SUWA's overarching goal is to protect Utah's remaining nine million acres of wild desert lands - lands owned by the American public and administered on our behalf by the Bureau of Land Management. Formed in 1983, SUWA currently links 225 local and national organizations in a massive effort to pass the America's Redrock Wilderness Act, now pending in Congress.

Alliance members represent a wide variety of interest groups and regions, such as: Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP America), Conservation Council for

Hawaii, Friends of the Boundary Waters (Minnesota), Great Salt Lake Audubon, Connecticut Audubon Society, and Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society.

On April 21, 2005, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), both longtime Utah wilderness champions, introduced the latest version of America's Redrock Wilderness Act to the 109th Congress. The bill drew a record number of original cosponsors, including several first-time congressional supporters. Upon its introduction, 151 representatives and 14 senators had signed onto the legislation.

For more information on SUWA and America's Redrock Wilderness Act, see their website: [www.suwa.org](http://www.suwa.org).

On November 17th, the evening will open with an informal reception and light refreshments at 7:00 PM; the presentation starts at 7:30 pm. This program is free and open to the public. Children are welcome, but should be with an adult. Ample free parking is available directly in front of the Nature Center main building.

To guarantee seating, advanced registration is required. To register, contact the CAS office by phone: 773-539-6793, e-mail: [cas@chicagoaudubon.org](mailto:cas@chicagoaudubon.org), or visit our website: [www.chicagoaudubon.org](http://www.chicagoaudubon.org). Or, contact Marci Buettgen, Program Chair: phone, 773-878-4421; e-mail, [mbchgo@comcast.net](mailto:mbchgo@comcast.net). □

## Chicago Area Christmas Bird Counts

Below are a few of the local Chicago area Christmas Bird Counts, of which Chicago Audubon helps co-sponsor two (Indiana Dunes and Chicago Urban). If you would like to help count birds for any of these counts, contact the compilers mentioned. For dates or contacts of additional Illinois Christmas Bird Counts, please see the following web page: <http://home.xnet.com/~ugeiser/Birds/BirdCounts.html>

### Local Chicago-area Christmas Bird Counts:

**Saturday, December 17, 2005:** Fermilab-Batavia (DuPage Birding Club <http://www.dupagebirding.org/>). Jeff Chapman; [Nuthatches6@cs.com](mailto:Nuthatches6@cs.com) 630-910-8684

**Saturday, December 17, 2005:** Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. (Dunes/Calumet Audubon Society and Chicago Audubon Society). ; Doris Nitecki, [mhnitecki@aol.com](mailto:mhnitecki@aol.com) 773-955-7385 (weekdays) and 219-787-8734 (weekends)

**Saturday, December 17, 2005:** McHenry County. David Frey 815-338-4866 [dafcfj656@yahoo.com](mailto:dafcfj656@yahoo.com).

**Sunday, December 18, 2005:** Chicago Urban (Evanston-North Shore Bird Club and Chicago Audubon Society) Jeff Sanders; [yellowstart5@yahoo.com](mailto:yellowstart5@yahoo.com) 847-657-6431.

**Sunday, December 18, 2005:** Lisle Arboretum (Chicago Ornithological Society <http://www.chicagobirder.org/lislecbc>) Geoffrey A. Williamson; [lislecbc@chicagobirder.org](mailto:lislecbc@chicagobirder.org) 773-935-8439.

**Monday, December 19, 2005:** Barrington (Prairie Woods Audubon, Kane County Audubon, Natural History Society of Barrington, and Max McGraw Wildlife Fdn.). Duane Heaton; [dheaton19@comcast.net](mailto:dheaton19@comcast.net) 847-358-5856 (evenings)

**Sunday, December 25, 2005:** Chicago Lakefront. Joel Greenberg; [ckerschmar@earthlink.net](mailto:ckerschmar@earthlink.net); 630-725-9416.

**Monday, December 26, 2005:** Evanston North Shore (Evanston-North Shore Bird Club). Joel Greenberg; [ckerschmar@earthlink.net](mailto:ckerschmar@earthlink.net) 630-725-9416; and Tim Wallace.

**Saturday, December 31, 2005:** Calumet City/Sand Ridge (Sand Ridge Audubon Society). Carolyn A. Marsh; [cmarsbird@prodigy.net](mailto:cmarsbird@prodigy.net); 219-659-7904.

**Sunday, January 1, 2006:** Waukegan (Evanston-North Shore Bird Club). Joel Greenberg; [ckerschmar@earthlink.net](mailto:ckerschmar@earthlink.net) 630-725-9416.

**Monday, January 2, 2006:** Thorn Creek/Park Forest (Thorn Creek Audubon Society). Jim Kelly; [jjkelly959@aol.com](mailto:jjkelly959@aol.com); (708) 798-3115; 2nd contact: Aura Duke - [auraduke@aol.com](mailto:auraduke@aol.com) (708 748-6407) □