



MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS *All activities open to the public.*

Vol. 37, No 1

Summer 2026

Saturday, June 6, 7:00 am. Field Trip to Mississippi Palisades State Park and Thomson sand prairies. We often encounter more than 70 species on this trip. Target species include a variety of nesting species including tanagers, cuckoos, and flycatchers, plus cerulean, yellow-throated and Kentucky warblers. Meet at Rapids City, IL boat ramp. Bring a sack lunch if desired. Contact qcaudubon@gmail.com if you have questions.

Friday and Saturday, June 26 and 27. Bio-blitz. According to the Ecological Society of America, a BioBlitz is a collaborative community science event where volunteers, students, and scientists work together to find and record as many wild plants, animals, fungi, and insects as possible within a specific area and time frame. For 2026, the Bi-State Conservation Action Network (Bi-Can) is holding the annual 24 hour bioblitz at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and Sherman Park. The event runs from 2 p.m. Friday through 2 p.m. Saturday. There will be interactive nature stations (3PM - 6PM Friday, 10AM - 1PM Saturday), guided hikes and species identification by local experts. Check the Bi-Can Facebook page (facebook.com/bicanqc/) for details.

Milan Bottoms Update

During the past year, Quad City Audubon and many community members have been concerned about potential negative impacts from the proposed cannabis dispensary and gas station development on property adjacent to Milan Bottoms. The City of Rock Island has been planning for some kind of commercial development in this area. But in addition to this commercial development the City had previously (March 2023) zoned approximately 550 acres of the area for "nature conservation". The City is working towards having the Southwest Rock Island Wetlands, as the conservation area is currently termed, registered as a land and water reserve with the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission. You can find more information about the project on the City's website at <https://www.rigov.org/1627/Southwest-Rock-Island-Wetlands>. I

Important activity about this issue is currently taking place through a partnership with Augustana College's Upper Mississippi Center for Sustainable Communities. The City engaged in this partnership to assist with ecological research and community engagement for the potential nature reserve. This collaboration involves a multi-year inventory of the site's natural resources,
(continued on page 2)

Visit us on the web at
www.quadcityaudubon.org.



Audubon

The Quad City Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society

OFFICERS

President

Jody Millar

Vice President

Krista Kefauver

Treasurer

Bernadene Bowles

Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS

Susa Stonedahl

Tim Murphy

Eliza Gordon

Walt Zuurdeeg

Patrick Carlson

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation

Board Members

Field Trips

Board Members

Membership

Walt Zuurdeeg

Newsletter

Patrick Carlson

Iowa Audubon Liaison

Walt Zuurdeeg

Mississippi Currents is published quarterly by the

Quad City Audubon Society
P.O. Box 81

Bettendorf, IA 52722
www.quadcityaudubon.org

Direct all general emails to:
qcaudubon@gmail.com

Illinois Spring Bird Count - Rock Island County

The Illinois Spring Bird Count was held May 9. This was my first year as compiler and Tim Murphy's stewardship made the transition very smooth. He was the compiler for the last 21 years. I hope I can compile as well as he did. Seven parties and 13 individuals covered Rock Island County. The weather was near perfect the first part of the day before it got rather windy.

126 species were found in the county. This is a little below the average of 131 over the last 15 years. Six of the seven woodpecker species, five vireos, and all six expected swallows were found. Six flycatchers were identified, and Pat Carlson and Elizabeth Russell found all of them in their territory. Pat noted that his territory was "unusually quiet. I normally expect to find close to 20 species of warblers and vireos, but this year I had only 3 vireo species and 7 warbler species. I am especially surprised by the low numbers since viewing conditions were ideal."

Shorebirds were abundant in my territory as a result of flooding from the Rock River and above average rainfall this Spring. This was the best shorebird year ever for me on this count. We (Krista Kefauver and myself) had hundreds of shorebirds comprising ten species, the best of which was a Short-billed Dowitcher.

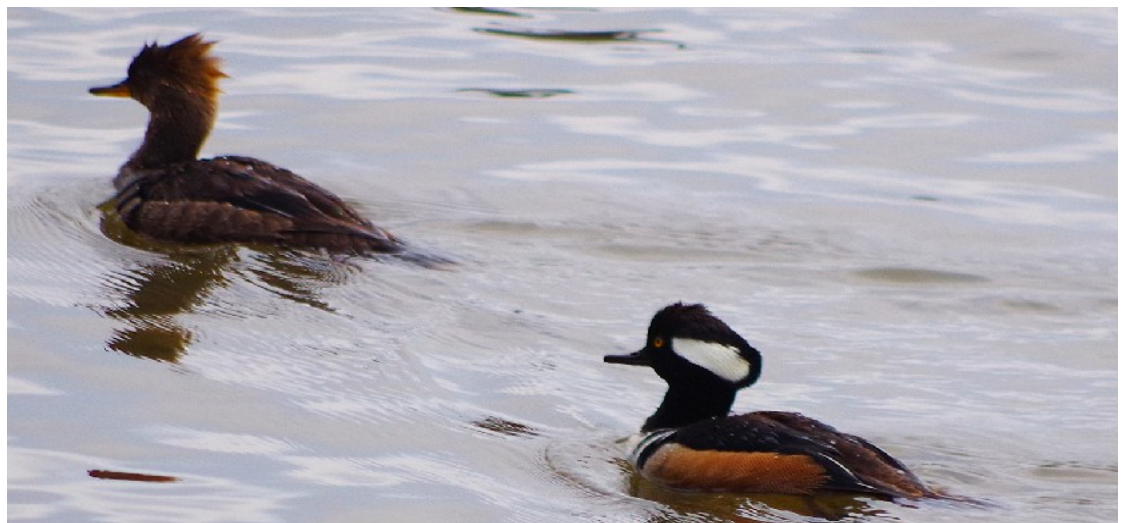
Notable finds countywide included Sandhill Crane (always a crowd favorite), Bobolink, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler. Several groups of birds were found in low numbers including waterfowl (6 species) and warblers (16). The "rarest" bird was a Eurasian Oystercatcher! It was found by Merlin Bird ID, the bird identification app, i.e., it was a misidentification! While it's a great accessory, this demonstrates that Merlin should never be solely relied upon for identification.

The best non-bird life form found in my territory was a River Otter. Unfortunately, it was a road kill. It was next to the Rock River just south of Hillsdale. It was nice to find but it would have been even nicer to find it alive!

All in all, it was a good day and it's always rewarding to contribute to citizen science.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made this happen: Pat Carlson, Judy Hartley, Jeanne Hedges, Krista Kefauver, Cathy Konrad, Tim Murphy, Elizabeth Russell, Janelle Swanberg, Chris Swanson, Dave VanLandegen, Cathy White, and JoAnn Whitmore.

-Walt Zuurdeeg



Hooded merganser photo submitted by Jody Millar.

(Milan Bottoms Update continued from page 1)

including habitat mapping; identification of invasive plant species; and population monitoring of birds, bats, mammals, aquatic species, and insect communities. The work also includes water quality monitoring and assessments of forested areas within the project boundary.

In addition to ecological research, the partnership includes a stakeholder engagement component designed to gather input from nearby property owners, residents, and other stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, workshops, and participatory mapping activities. These efforts are intended to help identify community priorities and inform future management decisions.

A community survey has been developed in partnership with Augustana College to help inform planning for the wetlands. Feedback collected through this survey will help guide ecological understanding, public priorities, and future management planning. You can find a link to take the survey at the bottom of the previously mentioned web page. Here it is again:

<https://www.rigov.org/1627/Southwest-Rock-Island-Wetlands> . The survey includes an invitation to become more involved, if you are interested.

-Pat Carlson



Field Trip to Corriell Nature Preserve

Corriell Nature Preserve in Muscatine County is managed by the Bur Oak Land Trust. Public access is limited to private tour. On Saturday, March 22, Quad City Audubon enjoyed a visit led by Jason Taylor, the Trust’s Executive Director.

At almost 200 acres, Corriell Nature Preserve is biologically diverse with sand prairie, oak savanna, sedge meadow, beaver wetland and oxbow wetland. In addition to birds, the Preserve boasts a variety of other wildlife—insects, snakes, turtles and mammals.

March 22 was overcast and one of those early Spring Midwest days when the high temperature happened at midnight and slowly fell. At first the preserve was not particularly “birdy”, but there was still plenty to see. We had just started our walk when Jason pointed out large colonies of winter dormant prickly pear cactus in the upland sand prairie. A little farther in we saw the burn piles where AmeriCorps participants are working to restore savanna by removing invasive locust trees. An Eastern meadowlark was singing in the savanna. Proceeding downhill we saw the beaver dam and the pond behind it where tree swallows were active. The pond held a variety of waterfowl— gadwall, mallard, green-winged teal, and hooded merganser—and also a soft-shelled turtle. The return walk led us through some relatively young silver maple and cottonwoods in the Cedar River flood plain that held American goldfinch and downy woodpecker.

When we left Corriell, we headed to Wiese Slough which was only few miles distant. There we encountered more waterfowl, including ring-necked duck. We were excited when a group of four sandhill cranes flew low overhead.

Corriell Nature Preserve is richly diverse habitat, which promises to get even better under active management. You can support the work of the Bur Oak Land Trust by visiting their website www.buroaklandtrust.org. There will be an opportunity to experience the preserve firsthand on June 19 and 20 when they are hosting a couple of guided walks—the Blooming Cactus Hike or a different view of the preserve during the Savanna at Sunset Hike. Contact info@buroaklandtrust.org or call 319-338-7030 for information.



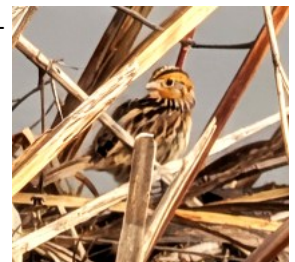
-Pat Carlson
Text and photos

Field Trip to Princeton Wildlife Area

Even though it was a beautiful morning and Princeton Wildlife Area is one of the region’s foremost habitats, only three birders attended this trip. April 11 started at about 50 degrees with a light wind and mostly sunny skies.

We enjoyed a variety of waterfowl, including three trumpeter swans, numerous lesser scaup, Northern shoveler, blue-winged teal and ring-necked duck. There were also a few ruddy duck; pied-billed grebe and a lone female hooded merganser. Canada geese were, of course, present. A Wilson’s snipe landed in the marsh grass almost in front of us and immediately took cover so we were not able to relocate it.

The bird of the day was a LeConte’s sparrow that flew across the path while we walked the dike. The bird was very cooperative and posed on the grasses at the water’s edge. He gave us great views from about 15 feet away for as long as we cared to look.



LeConte’s Sparrow photo by Jody Millar

At the next pond, we saw more ring-necks, scaup, teal and shovelers and we added gadwall. On the way back to the vehicles, we encountered a group of yellow-rumped warblers. Song sparrows were abundant and there were a couple of swamp sparrows as well as a marsh wren.

At the north end of the complex we added a few more songbirds, including golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglet, tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch and Carolina wren. Wood duck and northern flicker called in the timber, and we saw downy and hairy woodpecker plus a hermit thrush.

It was a great day to be outside.

-Pat Carlson

Mission Statement

The Quad City Audubon Society is dedicated to the enjoyment of birds; a better understanding of the natural world; stewardship of natural areas and habitats; fellowship; improvement of community awareness of environmental issues; and education of youth for the benefit of future generations

Thank you to those who contributed to this issue of
Mississippi Currents.

The next deadline for submissions is August 24. Submissions are gladly accepted.

Submit newsletter items to:
Patrick Carlson, at p.carlson@mchsi.com

Field Trip to Illiniwek Forest Preserve

The trip to Illiniwek on Sunday May 17 did not yield anything remarkable—an orchard oriole and some common warbler species. We had hoped that shore birds would still be present in the temporary wetland, but the wetland was dry when we visited,

-Jody Millar

Membership Application

I would like to join/renew as a member of the National Audubon Society and my local chapter. Please send me Audubon magazine and Mississippi Currents newsletter. Enclosed is my check for \$35 payable to National Audubon Society (include Chapter H63 on your check).

Or

I would like to join/renew only as a member of Quad City Audubon Society rather than the National Audubon Society. Please send me Mississippi Currents. Enclosed is my check for \$10 payable to Quad City Audubon Society.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Optional

I would like to make an additional donation to QCAS. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$ _____ made payable to Quad City Audubon Society.

Print this form and send to:
Quad City Audubon Society
P.O. Box 81
Bettendorf, IA 52722