

Rock Wren

by Eddie Kasper



A PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS YOUNG BIRDERS, A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE IOS

Illinois Young Birders



The Hoot

Fall 2013

IN THIS ISSUE

Across the Miles

By Jeff Reiter, ILYB Adult Sponsor and Editor of *The Hoot*

This just in: Illinois is a BIG state!
And here's another newflash: Not all young birders live in the Chicago region!

To ILYB's credit, the club is actively recruiting new members in a couple population centers well beyond our home base. As you'll read in this issue, Jennifer Kuroda is having early success in starting an ILYB chapter in Rockford. In the Bloomington area, Ben Murphy is laying the groundwork for a Central Illinois chapter.

Certainly one goal is to grow the membership roster. Attracting new ILYB members is essential because during any given year a few members will turn 19 and "age out." Without new members the club would eventually cease to exist!

But branching out beyond Chicagoland is important to ILYB's mission, too. The fundamental purpose of the club is to provide frequent peer group birding opportunities for young people throughout the state. While all members are welcome on all field trips, outings tend to be concentrated in the Chicago area. This obviously limits participation by members who live far away.

Establishing chapters in Springfield and Rockford addresses this issue, so let's commend Ben and Jennifer for their outreach efforts. Keep up the great work!

Another nice outreach story took place in June when ILYB hit the road for its first-ever joint field trip with another state's young birders club. You can read all about it on page 2.

Nothing beats a good road trip, right? In June I enjoyed one with my son, Jay. We went to Rockford to see the Mississippi Kites that nest in the Bloom School neighborhood. "MIKI" was a lifer for me and also for Jay, even though he's not a birder. (I'm working on that.)

Last year, I finally went downstate to see the Greater Prairie Chickens. One word: Wow! Jasper County felt like a whole different world—a part of Illinois this Ohio boy had never experienced.

I'm guessing many ILYB members have birded more of the Land of Lincoln than yours truly. In time, I hope to catch up.

Illinois politics stink, and our state's budget is a mess. But we live in a pretty good place for birding. Hopefully even more young birders will come to realize that thanks to ILYB.

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Making Friends in Indiana

By Rob Ripma, Co-Chair and Founder, Indiana Young Birders Club

On June 22, the Illinois Young Birders (ILYB) and Indiana Young Birders Club (IYBC) met at Willow Slough and Kankakee Sands in northwest Indiana for a joint field trip. It was very exciting for both clubs to finally get together and have a joint field trip with another state's group. The kids all hit it off right away and everyone had a great time getting to know each other throughout the day. We saw some fantastic birds, too!

Our first stop was at the Willow Slough Headquarters where a couple of the ILYB found an active Red-headed Woodpecker nest! Several of the members were also excited to get their lifer Purple Martins while waiting for the rest of the group to arrive.

Since storms were threatening, we decided to skip the rest of Willow Slough for the time being and head on to look for grassland species at Kankakee Sands. We started at the headquarters where there is a shelter so that we could stay out of the rain and continue to bird. Luckily, the storm moved to the south of us and we barely got any rain. From the shelter, we were able to get scope views of both Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows and Dickcissel! We tried to go down one short path through the grasslands but it was flooded over and we decided to turn around.

With two targets down, we moved on to look for a couple of the other specialty species of the area. Some of the group was able to see three Lark Sparrows but most missed them. As we were looking for the sparrows, the rain started back up and we decided to officially end the field trip. Several of the families wanted to keep birding in spite of the rain so a small group of us continued on.

As we drove along, Landon spotted a bird perched on the top of a tree and when we got the scope on it, it was a Blue Grosbeak! Other highlights as we drove the roads through Kankakee Sands included over 100 Grasshopper Sparrows, an estimated 80 Dickcissels, 15 Henslow's Sparrows, and several Bobolinks.

If you are a young birder and you live in either one of these states, I highly recommend that you look into joining your state's club.

This summer my family and I went on a long road trip. We had a grand adventure that took us through seven states, across the Midwest and into the Pacific Northwest. We stopped at places that had lots of history and birds.

First we arrived at the Badlands National Park, and we were greeted by our first Western Kingbird of the trip. He was sitting on a dead branch at the top of a tree right in front of the visitor center.

Next to the visitor center, is a lodge and restaurant, so we headed over to get dinner. While waiting for our food, we spotted a Western Meadowlark, a Mountain Bluebird, and several Violet Green Swallows.

While driving through the Badlands, heading West, we saw several Lark Sparrows, one young Orchard Oriole, lots of Meadowlarks, several groups of small sparrows jetting across the road, two Prairie Falcons hunting and three Turkey Vultures. We pulled over and parked so my mom could see the beautiful sunset along the Badlands, and while we were there we saw a couple of Rock Wrens. They were lifers for us!

On our last stop, we pulled over near a prairie dog town and we saw a Burrowing Owl, a Horned Lark and a few Nighthawks. We had a great time in the Badlands and I hope we can go there again.

We arrived at Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana, a place recommended by *Bird Watcher's Digest*. When we got there, there were birds everywhere! Bullock's Orioles, Spotted Towhees, Lazuli Buntings, a Pinion Jay, Western Kingbirds, Violet-Green Swallows,

Cliff Swallows and White Throated Swifts, and this was just at the beginning! We walked to the pillar and saw House Wrens, Rock Wrens, and one

Western Wood Pewee.

We walked to the top of the pillar to see the signature of William Clark from 1806 and to scan the horizon. The pillar is named Pompey after Sacagawea's son. She was the native American that helped Lewis and Clark along on their journey out West. When we looked out from the pillar we saw White-Throated Swifts circling around their breeding grounds and we saw something that looked like a Yellow-Breasted Chat way down on the ground. We went down to check it out and it turned out to be two Chats and we chased them around while getting eaten up by mosquitos.

A Western Birding Bonanza!

Text and photos by Eddie Kasper
ILYB Member, Age 11



White-Throated Swift

My brother, Brett, found a Lazuli Bunting nest with two Lazuli Bunting eggs and one cowbird egg. We asked the rangers if we could do anything about the nest, but they said no. It was a very good spot for birders coming from the east to see their western birds.



Harlequin Ducks

The Olympic Peninsula was one of my favorite birding spots on the trip. We stayed with my Aunt and Uncle in Port Angeles, just below Mt. Olympus. We started birding as soon as we got there. Our first species were Pine Siskin, Chestnut-Backed Chickadee, White-Crowned Sparrow, Common Raven, Northwestern Crow, Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker, Warbling Vireo, Black-Throated Gray Warbler, Bald Eagles, Spotted Towhees, Purple Finch, Townsend's Warbler (only heard), Red-Eyed Vireo, Song Sparrow, Eurasian Collared Doves, Mourning Doves and a Bushtit.

We stopped birding to play soccer and then my brother tripped and fell, breaking his arm, which ended all birding for the day.

The next day, we went to a place called Ediz Hook in Port Angeles. When we first got there, we saw lots of gulls sitting on floating logs from the nearby logging mill. There were Heermann's Gulls, Glaucous-Winged Gulls, Western Gulls, Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots,

Harlequin Ducks, a Pelagic Cormorant, a Black Oystercatcher, and a juvenile Tufted Puffin that was barely visible to us. Four of these birds were lifers.

The day after, my Uncle and I went to place crab traps in Dungeness Bay. When we were

placing them, we saw two Marbled Murrelets, and a cliff where Pigeon Guillemots were nesting by the hundreds. We sailed out to the Strait of Juan De Fuca and tried to get close to Protection Island where Puffins and Murres nest by the hundreds, but we only got to see the Puffins. On our way back, we saw more Pigeon Guillemots and one more Marbled Murrelet.

This wasn't the whole trip. We still had the San Juan Islands, Yellowstone and other National Parks to visit, but since I don't have much time left I will tell you my favorite species from each place. From Yellowstone National Park, it was a Grizzly Bear and Western Tanager. From Jewel Cave it was a Red Crossbill and Plumbeous Vireo, and from Wind Cave National Park it was a Lark Bunting and Bison. It was one of the best trips I ever had.

OSPREY BANDING

By Jack McCabe
ILYB Member, Age 12

This summer I was invited to take part in an osprey banding. I rode with the bird crew across a large prairie to the osprey nest. The bucket truck got stuck in the mud on the way there, but we were able to pull it out. The nest was on a platform at the top of a very tall pole. The bottom of the pole was wrapped in metal to prevent raccoons from climbing up and killing the chicks.

A wildlife biologist was raised by the bucket truck to the nesting platform. He picked up the three osprey chicks and put them each in a bag. The osprey parents were screaming and diving at the wildlife biologist.

Once back on the ground, a team of people began to examine the 6 week old chicks. Each osprey was weighed (about 7 ounces) and had blood drawn. Blood tests are used to measure the amount of heavy metals in the osprey. The osprey eat mainly fish that may be contaminated with dangerous pollutants found in rivers and lakes. The blood test provides information about the health of the bird's ecosystem.

The chicks were still too young for the biologists to determine if they were male or female. Each chick was banded after the examination and then quickly returned to their nest. Their parents were happy to have them safely back home.



Jack McCabe with a newly banded osprey

Drawn to Birds

Meet Catherine Gilbert, ILYB member and award-winning artist

Catherine Gilbert, age 14, just entered her sophomore year at Lake Zurich High School. She's entering a lot of art competitions, too, and rightly so. Her artistic talent and passion for drawing is quite apparent!

The Hoot recently asked Catherine a few questions about her art and birding.



Catherine's Great Egret oil and chalk pastel won a Scholastic Silver Key.

When did you first start drawing?

I've been doing traditional drawing for as long as I can remember, but I acquired a tablet and digital drawing software around a year ago. Getting the Bamboo tablet was one of my first experiences with more complicated digital art. About two years ago, I also started private art lessons, which introduced me to chalk and oil pastels and other mediums.



Catherine holds a Trumpeter Swan picture, created in chalk pastel.

What do you like most about it?

I like being able to translate a picture in my head into a work of art.

Do you think drawing birds makes you a better birder?

Yes, definitely! Spending an hour or so drawing a bird means you practically memorize what it looks like. Sketching birds has me pick out the wing, body, and bill shape. While it's crucial for art, it also means when I go out and see a bird I've drawn, I quickly know what it is.

What media do you work with and do you have a favorite?

I work primarily with pencil and pastel, as well as digitally. Chalk pastel is probably my favorite medium because it's easy to blend and can create a wide range of colors.

Do you focus on birds with your art or other subjects too?

I draw/paint other subjects, such as landscapes or other animals. Birds are my best subjects though, and usually I focus on them.

What's the biggest award you have won so far, and for what work of art?

I recently won a Scholastic Gold Key, as well as two Silver Keys. The Gold was for oil pastels of an ostrich. The Silver Keys were for oil pastels of

an egret and a charcoal of a Roman bust. I am also a prior Lake County Fair division champion.

Do you have a favorite bird, and have you drawn it?

My favorite bird is the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), or any other of its close relatives (masked, grass, sooty, ash-faced). They have the coolest heart shaped faces and colors, sharp hearing, low light vision, and muffled flight, but the worst call. They're really just beautiful and interesting birds. I draw them all of the time.



This Barn Owl is one of Catherine's digital creations.

What do you do when you aren't drawing?

When I'm not birding or drawing, I play cello in the symphonic orchestra, participate in Scholastic Bowl and Science Team, and write short stories.

Thanks, Catherine, and good luck with your many pursuits!

ILYB Members Featured at Art and Photography Exhibit

Several ILYB members showed off their considerable artistic and photographic talents at the "Birds of Lake/Cook Counties Benefit Invitational Art & Photography Exhibit." The show took place August 15-29 at the Erehwon Mountain Outfitters store in Bannockburn.

Congratulations to Ethan Ellis, Jake Bartecki, Eddie Kasper and Brett Kasper. A sampling of their entries are displayed here.

The exhibit was sponsored by Erehwon, Chicago Ornithological Society, Illinois Audubon Society and IAS's Lake/Cook Chapter.

All profits from the sale of the prints as well as select Erehwon products were donated to the Illinois Audubon Society, the state's oldest private conservation organization and an active land trust that has saved more than 3,000 acres of land throughout Illinois.

Scott Ellis, father of Ethan, organized the exhibit.



Canada Warbler by Brett Kasper, age 8



Drawings by Ethan Ellis, age 11



American Robin by Eddie Kasper, age 11



Eastern Bluebird by Jake Bartecki, age 14

Member Q&A:**HENRY GRIFFIN****How old are you and at what age did you become a birder?**

I'm 13 now and was 11 when I started birding in February 2012. I may be a novice birder but I think that you can always learn something when you're out birding. For example, when I was walking in a forest in Michigan just this week, I thought, "Hey, why don't I play the Cerulean Warbler song and see if anything happens?" And so I played the song, and immediately a tiny, sky-blue passerine zoomed down to the ground and started doing a "war-dance," as I called it. It was an angry male Cerulean Warbler (life bird!) that was defending its territory! I immediately turned my iPad off, knowing that it is bad to agitate endangered birds like the Cerulean. I had always heard that they stay in the tree tops, but from just simply birding by myself, I learned something about an endangered species while I was two feet away from it! I also learned not to agitate birds with recordings of their songs.

When did you join ILYB?

In May 2012, and my first field trip with the club was to Montrose Point that month. I immediately loved ILYB because there were actually people my age who liked birds as much as I did—and knew way more about them than I did! Since joining I have learned more about birding than anything I could have learned on iBird.

What got you started -- was there a "spark bird"?

It was a Cooper's Hawk that flew into my backyard. I was so amazed by its sheer strength and prowess of flight

that I immediately purchased iBird and figured out what the bird was. For me, that was like opening to the first page of a new favorite book that I was about to read. It was satisfying to identify the bird, but what really hooked me on birding was the mystery and constant surprise of the sport.

Do you keep lists? If yes, what is your favorite or most meaningful list?

I used to keep lists but I grew weary of tacking down every single species (10 House Sparrows, 15 European Starlings, 5 Rock Pigeons). Now I only keep lists of warblers that I see during the migration season.



Henry was ready with camera when he had a rare close encounter with this Cerulean Warbler.

What's the coolest bird you've seen recently, and where did you see it?

It was that Cerulean Warbler at Yankee Springs Recreational Area in Michigan. It allowed me to take the best pictures of birds I have ever taken! It was so amazing because most people only get to see this endangered species while it is flitting about in the treetops, but this guy came all the way down to the forest

floor to pose for his frontals and profiles.

What is your favorite bird and why?

My favorite bird is the Hooded Warbler (sorry Cerulean!), because I love the contrast between the male bird's olive back, bright yellow underparts, and jet black hood. I also love how it makes you work hard to get a good picture of it, which is deeply satisfying when you do manage to photograph it.

It's hard to pick ONE bird. What are some other favorites?

My second favorite bird is the Pileated Woodpecker. Every time this bird flies over me in the middle of a dense forest, I am stunned by the size of this thing. Being used to Downy Woodpeckers my whole life, when I got my lifer Pileated, I was amazed by how

huge and unreal the bird looked. It almost looked like it could have come from Jurassic Park! My third favorite bird is the Scarlet Tanager. I am obsessed by this bird when it flies overhead, looking like a bright red light against the green foliage of the surrounding forest.

What's the best ILYB field trip you ever attended and why?

It was my first one, when we went to Montrose. I loved seeing an amazing bird whenever Matthew Cvetas and company

yelled out "Cape May Warbler!" or "Ovenbird!"

What is your favorite or most regular local birding spot?

Probably Montrose Point.

If you could get on a plane and go birding ANYWHERE what place would you choose?

It would have to be Panama because of the amazing diversity of avian life there. My favorite part about the country is that in the southern half, you get all of the South American bird species, and in the northern half, you get all of the Central American birds.

Field (Museum) of Dreams

ILYB's back-stage visit to Chicago's world-class natural history museum provides up-close look at ornithology in action—plus some ultra-rare bird specimens

On July 27, the Illinois Young Birders had the opportunity to visit one of the biggest museum bird collections in the world. This was not your average field trip!

Our visit to Chicago's Field Museum began with look inside the DNA lab, where ILYB member Nathan Goldberg talked about the process of sequencing DNA and his summer internship project studying the population genetics of Ivory-Billed Aracari.

Another ILYB member, Ethan Gyllenhaal, then gave a presentation about his summer internship using molecular techniques to study lime disease in birds that migrate through the Chicago area.

Finally, ILYB field trip coordinator Josh Engel, a Field Museum staff member, discussed his research on genetics of birds of Africa's Albertine Rift and how he went from being a young birder to becoming a museum ornithologist.

This was all really just a warm up. The real fun was getting to peek inside the Field's vaunted bird collection to see specimens of extinct species like Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet; compare various outrageously plumaged birds-of-paradise; and visit the beetle room, where dermestid beetles help prepare skeletal specimens. — **Josh Engel**

Editor's note: About a month after the Field Museum trip, Ethan Gyllenhaal went off to his freshman year at the University of Rochester. We'll miss Ethan as an ILYB member but wish him luck in his college career and with birding the upstate New York region!



Above: Nathan Goldberg talks about DNA sequencing in the Field's Pritzker Laboratory.



Left: Ethan Gyllenhaal explains his summer internship project.

(Photos by Josh Engel)

Right: The Field's Josh Engel opens a specimen drawer to show visitors some extinct species.

Below: The egg of an Elephant Bird.

(Photos by Jennifer Kuroda)



Reaching Out in Rockford

Text and photos by
Jennifer Kuroda,
ILYB Adult Sponsor

In January of 2013, I had an idea to get more youth in the Rockford area involved in conservation of birds. And what better way to do that than to encourage an interest in birding! After a quick search online, I discovered the Illinois Young Birders and reached out to the club to see if I could start a Rockford group through their organization. The idea quickly became a reality.

Initially, the group has been organized through Thurgood Marshall Elementary School as an after-school group with the intent to expand into a community location. Marshall School houses two special programs for the Rockford Public School District: the Middle School component of the Gifted Program and Grades 4-7 of the Montessori Program. Both programs, in their own unique way, promote academic excellence, personal responsibility and integrity.

The principal, Jill Faber, is very supportive in allowing our group to meet regularly after school. The group currently consists of six new members of the ILYB that vary in their birding skills, but most are new to birding too.

To help the group expand their knowledge about birds, several of the after-school sessions have consisted of learning about backyard birds, dissecting Barn Owl pellets, and learning more about birds through

Learning about birds through art projects is fun and effective.



art. Getting the kids out in the field is a priority, so there will be several field trip opportunities this fall and winter.

I'm also excited about some projects the ILYB is developing on the school grounds, including a bluebird trail and a bird-friendly garden.

As the Rockford group grows, I hope to share more of what they accomplish in *The Hoot*.



Julia Kuroda, age 10, holds a mammal skull discovered inside a barn owl pellet.

Bird Trivia CHALLENGE!

1. In "The Big Year," what was Owen Wilson's nemesis bird throughout the movie?
2. Generally regarded as most abundant species in North America.
3. North America's smallest dabbling duck.
4. Largest member of bunting family in North America.
5. Best hearing of any known bird.
6. World's only gull that nests in trees.
7. Only two species of warblers are cavity nesters. Name them.
8. The only warbler that eats seeds as well as insects.
9. John James Audubon is credited for being the first bird bander. With what species did he conduct his experiments?
10. World's most terrestrial wading bird species.

Answers on page 10

Ornithology

Up Close

By Nathan Goldberg
ILYB member, Age 17

Cornell University is based in Ithaca, a village in upstate New York's Finger Lakes region, at the base of Cayuga Lake. It is there that the Cornell Lab of Ornithology runs a Young Birders Event every year, and this year I had the good fortune of being accepted and attending. The event takes place over three days in late August, where young birders from around the United States get to learn about the resources the Lab has for birders, as well as the opportunities present for undergraduates at the Lab.

The Young Birders Event is limited to about 15 kids, and every year this group of young birders has the privilege of traveling around the Ithaca area with Chris Wood and Jessie Barry. They are two amazing people who work in the Lab and at Cornell full time. The overall program is based around teaching young birders what happens at the lab, and how to get involved in research on population genetics,



Young birders attending the August event at Cornell Lab of Ornithology received a thorough introduction to Lab activities including field work. The author, back row in cap, is standing beside Chris Wood (light blue shirt). Jessie Barry is in the front with yellow cap.

evolutionary biology, and other bird-related subjects.

During the trip, our group learned about taking high-quality video and audio recordings of birds for the Lab's Macaulay Library of biodiversity media.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

We got to experiment with parabolic microphones, and were able to pinpoint sounds that are usually inaudible with a normal ear. These recordings can be of use to scientists gauging variations in species, and can be added to the already massive collection for future reference.

Also during the trip, a Lab team taught us about eBird—how it works internally, and how the data are used for conservation and population studies. We also enjoyed a sneak peek at future plans for the eBird site.

The Cornell event really helped me and other young birders see the

career and research opportunities related to birding. I highly encourage any young birder of age that has an urge to deepen his or her knowledge of birds to apply for this program next summer.

Editor's note: The Cornell Young Birders Event is for students in grades 9 through 12. For more information, contact Jessie Barry at jb794@cornell.edu

ILYB Adult Volunteers

Matthew Cvetas, Chair

Josh Engel, Field Trip
Coordinator

Scott Cohrs

Eric Gyllenhaal

Kelly Kasper, Membership

Jennifer Kuroda, North Central
Illinois

Ben Murphy, Central Illinois

Jeff Reiter, Newsletter

About *The Hoot*

The Hoot is a publication of the Illinois Young Birders, a project of the Illinois Ornithological Society. Material is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without the specific written permission of IOS. Articles, photos, artwork and other submissions by ILYB members are always welcome. Please send materials to the editor: jreiter@wordsonbirds.com.

Join ILYB!

Do you have an interest in birds? Are you between the ages of 9 and 18? If yes, we think you'd enjoy being a member of Illinois Young Birders. You'll meet other young birders throughout Illinois and neighboring states, attend expertly guided field trips with other young birders and make lasting friendships with others who share your passion for birding. To sign up, please visit illinoisyoungbirders.org. See you on the trail!



ILYB BULLETIN BOARD

Upcoming Events

Saturday, Sept. 21, 8:00 am
Sugar Grove Nature Center
McLean, IL
Leader: Ben Murphy

Saturday, Sept. 28, 8:30 am
ILYB Service Day
North Pond Nature Sanctuary
Lincoln Park, Chicago
Host: Chicago Wilderness Corporate Council

Saturday, Oct. 19, 8:00 am

Clinton Lake, DeWitt County
Joint Field Trip with IOS
Leader: Matt Fraker

Field Trip Results

Trip summaries and photos are posted on the ILYB website:
illinoisyoungbirders.org

DuPage Birding Club Auction!

Plan to attend DBC's biennial fundraiser on Oct. 10 at Cantigny Park in Wheaton. Free admission and parking. All are welcome at this fun event for birders of ALL ages. Come and bid on the Young Birder's Basket! Money raised supports DBC and bird conservation.

TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Snowy Owl
2. Red-Winged Blackbird
3. Green-Winged Teal
4. Blue Grosbeak
5. Barn Owl
6. Bonaparte's Gull
7. Lucy's and Prothonotary
8. Pine Warbler
9. Eastern Phoebe
10. Cattle Egret



Welcome New ILYB Members!

Gavin Graham

Isao O'Brien

Mirakle Rundall-Kizart

Parker Scott

Zeke Stephens

McKinley Torre

Giavana Trammell