



The Hoot

A publication of the Illinois
Young Birders,
a special project of the Illinois
Ornithological Society

Volume I, Issue 1 • Summer 2010



Upcoming Events

- September 18th Magic Hedge, Chicago, IL
Led by Geoff and Christine Williamson
- October 16th Hawkwatch at Illinois Beach State Park.
Led by Vic Berardi
- November 13th The Field Museum, Chicago, IL
Led by Mary Hennan of the Field Museum and ILYB Member Ari Rice

Off to a Great Start!

Since forming Illinois Young Birders in March 2010, we have been quite busy. Not only have we had field trips in May, June, and August, but we've also had a logo competition, had stationary and brochures printed, seen some amazing birds and made some great new friends who share the passion for birding.

Thanks to all of the parents who have worked hard in getting your kids to our field trips. Without you, this would not be happening. Your kids are all so talented and gifted and smart. I've enjoyed getting to know each of our young birders and am looking forward to meeting future members. I am excited to see them grow into future stewards of our beautiful planet and it's marvelous birds.

I also have to thank the board of IOS for making this all happen.

Enjoy Issue 1 of *The Hoot!* (name courtesy of ILYB member, Owen Shipley!)

Cheers,

Brian Herriott, ILYB Adult Coordinator



Trip Reports

The Illinois Young Birders got off to a birdy start with field trips in May, June, and August 2010. Check out the details of the trips and related pictures inside.



Member Spotlight: Nandu Dubey

Young Birder, Nandu Dubey, is a 13-year-old bird artist who recently had an art show at Volo Bog featuring his work. ILYB coordinator, Brian Herriott, interviews Nandu about his passion for birds and bird art.

Q: When did you first start drawing birds? Birding?

A: I have been birding as well as drawing birds since I was 4 years old.

Q: Who are your favorite bird artists?

A: I like Roger Tory Peterson the most out of all the artists that have drawn or painted birds. I also like Robert Bateman because of the style he uses in his work.

A: I plan to continue pursuing my art work on birds and becoming an illustrator of a nature magazine. One of the schools where I would like to pursue my education is Cornell Lab of Ornithology. One of my main goals in the future is to use my art work on birds for education and bird conservation. I have already formed a forum called BCEA, which stands for Bird Conservation and Education by Art. This forum will help increasing awareness about birds, bird habitats, and environment

bird?

A: I use many sources such as the Internet, field guides, and even my own photos to understand the size, proportions, and colors of the bird. I also personalize the drawing by making the bird's posture and its habitat for my drawing based on my own previous sightings of that bird.

Q: Are there any birds that you haven't seen yet that you'd like to see?

“One of my main goals in the future is to use my art work on birds for education and bird conservation.”

Q: What are some of your favorite birds?

A: I am fond of all birds and I would take every chance to see any bird, but if I had to choose then I would go with Loons and Warblers, my favorite bird is the Common Loon.

Q: What are your future plans as an artist?

through the art work on birds done by me and possibly later, others. I really hope to introduce and engage many young people into birding through my art work. I would also like to share my art work with ILYB and other organizations on birds and nature for the same purpose.

Q: How do you go about drawing a

A: The Arctic Loon, Grey-cheeked Thrush, and Steller's Fish Eagle are some of the many birds that I want to see.

Q: What is your favorite place to bird?

A: Horicon Marsh in Wisconsin is one of my favorite places to bird. I





Official logo, submitted by Sulli Gibson, age 15

Logo Contest

The Illinois Young Birders held a contest this spring to design the club logo. Over 50 votes were cast on our online poll, and although every logo received votes, the above logo was ultimately chosen and approved as the official logo. The other excellent submissions are featured below.



Submitted by Sorren Aldridge



Submitted by Connor Ross



Submitted by Edward Warden

Dubey Interview cont'd from page 2

also spend a lot of time birding in Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside, Illinois and Rollins Savannah in Grayslake, Illinois. Also in the past, I have particularly enjoyed birding at the Illinois River Valley, Starved Rock, Illinois, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, and I also enjoy birding in India.

Q: Tell me a little about your family? Do they like to bird?

A: My dad, Ashish, is in research and development at United States Gypsum Corporation manufacturing company, my mom, Anima, is a homemaker, and my brother, Sachin, is in 3rd grade. We all bird together as a family all the time.

Q: Do you have any other hobbies/interests other than birding/art?

A: Some of my interests and hobbies are playing and watching basketball, listening to music, swimming, biking, and nature photography. I'm a hockey fan. I'm a die-hard Vancouver Canucks fan. I also follow team Canada Hockey in the Olympics, the IIHF World Championship and the other championships.

Q: What is your most memorable encounter with a bird?

A: My most memorable encounter with a bird was in Horicon Marsh where we got to release birds after they had been banded or recorded. There, I got to release a Magnolia Warbler.

Q: Do you have any birding mentors that you've learned a lot from?

A: Roger Tory Peterson is my true birding mentor even though he isn't alive anymore. I have learned a lot from him through his field guides and

illustrations. It was through his books that I got really hooked into birding. I used to carry his field guides with me all the time when I was little. That still happens only now when I am birding.

Q: Do you keep a life list? How many are on your list?

A: Yes. I have 369 birds on my life list.

Q: Do you have a favorite book?

A: Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America is my favorite book and my favorite field guide is Peterson Field Guide to Birds Eastern and Central North America.

Q: Are any of your friends into birds?

A: Not really, but I got one of my cousins into birding in India. Through BCEA and ILYB, I hope to involve more of my friends into birding in the future.

Q: Could you share what you did with the money collected from the bird prints and fold-outs at your artist reception?

A: I have donated 25% of it to the Volo Bog State Natural Area and 75% to the National Audubon Society to help clean the birds in the recent oil-spill crisis in the gulf.

Bills and Quills

essays on birds and birding



Birding Mythology

written by Connor Ross, ILYB member, age 12

Look at that robin in your backyard, with his brilliant orange breast. Yes, he's real. Take a peek on the nuthatch, hopping down the tree branch at a nearly 90-degree angle, with a seed in his mouth. The nuthatch isn't a figure of your imagination. He's there. He's real. But over the years, birds have been made up in mythology.

The most famous of the mythical birds is known as the phoenix, originating in the Middle East. It is famous for the fact that it builds a nest of cinnamon and ignites it, bathing itself in flames. From the ashes rise a brand new phoenix, who, in 500 years, will ignite itself and continue the cycle. The phoenix is thought to originate from the Egyptian benu, a heron-like bird. The Persian simurgh, the Chinese fenghuang, and the Russian firebird are more examples of eternal life in a bird.

It's a bird! It's a plane! No, it's really a

bird! The biggest bird in the world! Accounted for in Marco Polo's travels and *One Thousand and One Nights* is the gigantic roc, or rukh, from Madagascar. It is said the roc only landed on a mountain in what is now Iran. Mythologists think there could be two possible explanations. One is the ten-foot tall Aepyornis, or elephant bird, a type of bird similar to a bulky ostrich, called a moa. Another is the eagle Stephanoetus, one with a ten-foot wingspan that preyed on the giant lemurs and pygmy hippos that once lived on Madagascar. Other giant birds in mythology are the Jewish ziz bird, so big that its foot touched the ground while its head touched the heavens, and the Native American thunderbird, so big that it carried thunderstorms.

Other animals have bird features but are not entirely avian. The griffin from the Middle East has the forequarters and wings of an eagle, but with the hindquarters of a lion. The hippogriff is

the hybrid of a horse and a griffin, the symbol for everlasting love, since griffins usually eat horses. Cockatrices and basilisks are deadly animals that kill with a single glance. They often had the features of a galliforme (such as a chicken), combined with reptiles such as lizards and snakes. The cockatrice was born from a cockerel's egg laid during a full moon, and incubated by a snake or toad for nine years. The crowing of a cockerel and the weasel were the cockatrice's mortal enemies. The sirens and harpies were often great birds of prey with the heads of beautiful women (or in the harpy's case, an ugly hag).

So, next time you see an eagle fly over a river or a robin eat a worm in your backyard, think of the mythical birds that often aroused from birds' features.



Illinois young birder, Connor Ross, dedicated a recent 4-H project to celebrating his time with Illinois Young Birders. Connor has been an active member of ILYB, taking part in field trips and contributing essays, fun facts and ideas for *The Hoot*.

Trip Reports



Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center May 1, 2010

The Illinois Young Birders Club conducted its very first field trip to the Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center in Willow Springs, IL on May 1st from 8am to 12pm. There were 9 members on the trip as well as 8 adults. We counted a total of 52 species throughout the morning and had quite a few spring arrivals.

Upon first arriving, a Northern Waterthrush was singing next to the parking lot. Other dawn choristers included Chipping Sparrow, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Gray Catbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-rumped Warbler, House Wren, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Blue-winged Warbler (unfortunately not seen). Most of these birds were seen and/or heard near the beehives close to the nature center.



After walking down the path a bit, we noticed an Eastern Kingbird sally-gleaning from the tops of the trees and Eastern Bluebirds getting ready to nest in their boxes. Tree Swallows were also flying over the grass and perching on a nearby martin house.

In the woods, someone quickly spotted a male Eastern Towhee very close to the path and soon thereafter a Red-headed Woodpecker flew right overhead, allowing all of us wonderful, albeit brief, looks at this gorgeous bird.

The rest of the walk provided us with looks at some other nice birds such as a flyover Broad-winged Hawk, a male Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Orioles, and a singing Gray Catbird.

We also saw Painted Turtles, a Red

Admiral butterfly, a water snake of some sort, and a nice assortment of spring wildflowers and fungi. We had fun learning birdsongs throughout the day as well. Overall it was a wonderful kickoff trip for the ILYB with a very impressive group of young birders. The day ended with a picnic lunch at Maple Lake under the White Oaks. At lunch we especially enjoyed the Baltimore 'Oreos' that I brought. (Joke courtesy of Connor Ross)



Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie

June 6, 2010



We had another great turnout for our second field trip with 9 members attending. We tallied 55 species on this gorgeous day out on the prairie. Highlights included Grasshopper Sparrow (pictured above, taken by Ethan Gyllenhaal), Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Dickcissel, Blue Grosbeak, Northern Mockingbird, and Bell's Vireo. Although the main target bird, the Upland Sandpiper, wasn't seen, we still had plenty of birds to keep us busy. Many thanks go out to Lee Witkowski, a volunteer for Midwin, for taking us into the private areas of Midwin. We got to see firsthand how incredible this prairie restoration is and what a great impact it is having on the birdlife there.



There was good birding as soon we parked our cars at Explosives Road trailhead. Some of our target grassland birds such as Bobolink, Dickcissel, and Grasshopper Sparrow were in full song and easily visible. Soon, someone found a pair of Blue Grosbeaks on the road leading to the parking lot that most of us got great looks at.

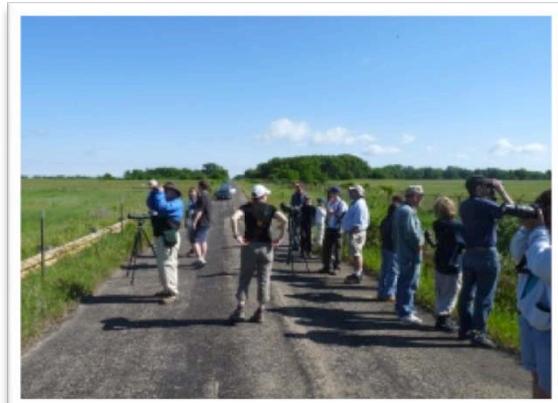
We then got into a caravan and moved into the closed

off areas of Midwin. We made several stops throughout the park looking for key birds. At one location, there were many grass covered bunkers, which were used to store ammunition by the military. The Upland Sandpipers frequently sit atop these bunkers

during their time at Midwin but we didn't have any luck finding them here.

The rest of the morning we spent driving to different locations in search of more birds. We had a brief look at a Loggerhead Shrike,

but before that we had a little excitement as our leader's car got stuck in the mud. Of course, Ethan Gyllenhaal



and Nathan Goldberg had birds to see, so they quickly pushed his car out of the muck. The final highlight of the day came after the picnic when the Gyllenhaal's called me to report they had found a Bell's Vireo on Hoff Road in the parking lot. Those of us who stayed for lunch got to see and hear this marvelous little bird.

Hummingbird Festival at Camp Sagawau August 28, 2010



Seven members of Illinois Young Birders met at 7:30 AM at Camp Sagawau in Lemont, IL. Illinois Audubon along with Will County Audubon did a really great job in setting up this unique event. Longtime certified bird banders Denis DeCoursey and Vern Kleen did an excellent job in educating the public on both the necessity and pitfalls of bird banding. Mr. DeCoursey was banding forest birds, which include Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. The Chickadees were quite difficult to extract from the mist nets he told us, and several volunteers had to help him remove the birds. Once taken out of the bags, he would take measurements of the birds and find out if they were male or female. He would then attach small, colored bands to their legs very carefully. Birds have often had their legs amputated by banders so it is

crucial that he takes extra special caution while banding. Then he entered this information in his logbook before moving on to the next bird. Some of our young birders even got the chance to release

some of these birds once he was finished banding them. You could tell Mr. DeCoursey truly loved what he was doing and it was enjoyable listening to his stories around the banding table.

At 9 AM, we moved up the hill to the farm building where Mr. Vern Kleen, one of very few licensed hummingbird banders in Illinois, was preparing to band hummingbirds. While he was discussing his work, Ethan and Aaron Gyllenhaal and Ari Rice all noticed a female Scarlet Tanager sally-gleaning bees and other insects in an oak tree right next to us. This bird was very close to us and was putting on quite a show. Soon thereafter, the first hummingbird was caught in the cage trap and Mr. Kleen brought the bird over to

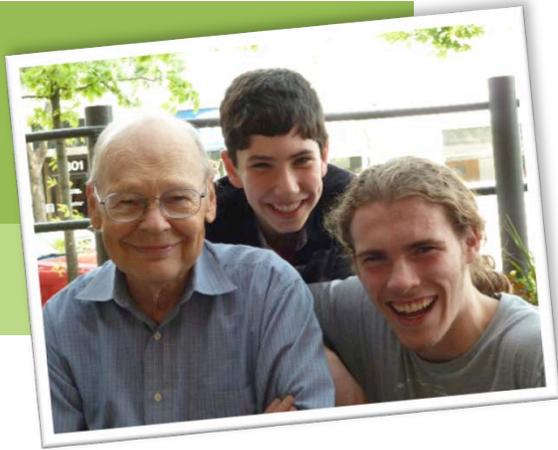
show everybody. After recording it's measurements and banding the bird (very small bands!), he then took the bird around so that we could all feel the bird's heartbeat. Once the bird was ready for release, he would allow younger people to hold it in their hand and release it. The bird would just lie there in a state of torpor! To make the bird fly he tapped the underside of the hand, startling the bird into flight. Some of our young birders were lucky enough to release hummingbirds too.

Although we didn't tally a large species list for the day, we did learn a lot about bird banding and the

lives of hummingbirds. Thanks to Illinois Audubon and Will County Audubon for sponsoring this great event. Thanks also to our young birders and their parents for making the trip to Lemont.



Also thanks to John Adams, one of our Adult Supporting members, for providing us with some photos from the day.



Adult Birder Spotlight

ILYB members Nathan Goldberg and Edward Warden interview their birding mentor, Mr. John Purcell of Chicago.

Q. How did you get interested in birding?

A. I got interested in birding when I was 13 years old and a bird landed on our bird feeder in the winter. My parents knew Downy Woodpeckers and Blue Jays, but I didn't know what this little thing was. A little gray bird with a crest, and they had never seen this before. I got curious and my father was in commercial arts, and he had downstairs in his so-called studio, he had file after file of clip art. He'd go through and he'd be clipping out stuff, and he had a big fat file on birds. I went through his bird file and I was really surprised on how many different kinds of birds there. I had no idea. I mean, I knew there was more than one kind of bird, but I didn't know there were so many. And anyway, I found, of course, it was a Tufted Titmouse.

Q. What was your first Field Guide?

A. Birds of America, the great big thing. Louis Agassiz Fuertes illustrated it. But the trouble was, there were no clues as to identification. It would have a feather-by-feather description of a bird, and you had to sit there and look at this thing and try to figure out what this bird was.

Q. What year were you born in?

A. 1933 and got I got interested in birds in 1946.

Q. Did you have any favored locations that you would bird a lot?

A. I had a friend Kenneth. Kenneth Carter. And he was my birding buddy. We were within a fairly short bike ride from the DuPage River around the Churchill Forest Preserve, north of Glen Ellyn. He'd call me up and say, "You wanna go to the Dupe?" We'd get out on the DuPage River and we would see Muskrats and we'd see black snakes. It was pretty neat out there. I think we once had a King Rail. We never did see a Virginia Rail down there.

Q. What is one of your best birding memories?

A. I got my life Black-throated Blue Warbler on my thirteenth birthday in 1946 at the Morton Arboretum.

Q. Did you ever have a mentor/teacher?

A. There was a woman there who taught a bird class on Saturday mornings there. Kenneth and I would ride the five miles out there on our bikes. She had a degree in Ornithology from Cornell, and boy were we impressed. She had a pair

of 7x35 Bausch and Lomb and we were using Sears Roebuck 3 power field glasses. Binoculars were few and far between. I think the standard birding binoculars were 7x35 Bausch and Lomb back then. I think that any birder that had the money, that's what they had.

Q. Have you had any big bird finds?

A. Kenneth and I once had a big find. One spring day, Kenneth and I had found a Red-shouldered Hawk nest at the Morton Arboretum. We told Mrs. Wasson and she took the whole class over there to see it. That's about the only Red-shouldered Hawk I have ever seen.

I remember it was New Years day, 1981, and I went to Montrose to see if there were any ducks, and there was a Bohemian Waxwing sitting there in a shrub. I didn't know anybody to call, and I never sent that in.

"Never assume something. If you see a bird and say, 'Oh, well that must be a so and so.' It isn't necessarily."

Q. Have you birded all your life?

A. Once I moved back to Chicago, after having gone to college and



Red-headed
Woodpecker
Melanerpes erythrocephalus

Length 9 ¼ inches long
Wingspan 17 inches

Migration Nonmigrant

Voice Abrupt, burry *quearrrrrrr!*, harsh fuss, *tchur-tchur*

The Red-headed Woodpecker is an average sized woodpecker. Adults are strikingly tri-colored with a red head and neck, black back and tail and white underparts. The wings are black with secondary white remiges. Like Bobolinks, Red-headed Woodpecker populations have declined and have been classified as Near Threatened, due to competition from nesting European Starlings and the destruction of dead trees.



Fun Facts

- How does a woodpecker protect its brain from a concussion? Unlike humans, the skull is tight around the brain, and a spongy pad in the front of the face provides protection as well. The tongue, three times as long as the beak, and actually circles around the brain, providing a third layer of protection.
- The Red-headed Woodpecker is often confused with the Red-Bellied Woodpecker by non-birders, though the latter species is colored more like a northern flicker.
- Three subspecies are recognized: *M. e. brodkorbi*, *M. e. caurinus*, and *M. e. erythrocephalus*.

Where the Illinois Young Birders Saw Them
Little Red Schoolhouse Center.

Credits: Text and black and white drawings by Connor Ross; Color drawings by Nandu Dubey



Bobolink
Dolichonyx oryzivorus



Length 6-8 in long

Migration Winter migrant, heading to Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay

Voice Male makes a loud, bubbling *bob-o-link*, while in flight a repeated, whistled *ink* is heard

The Bobolink is a small blackbird, and the only member of the genus *Dolichonyx*. Breeding males are black, with a rich-yellow buff on the back of its head. The scapulars and rump are white. On the male Bobolink, the yellow buff fades to whitish by midsummer. Breeding females are similar in appearance to a female blackbird, being light yellow with brown stripes everywhere except the face and breast. Though their status is Least Concern, the Bobolink's numbers have been decreasing due to habitat loss through agricultural farming.

Fun Facts

- Bobolinks are excellent migrants. Though their breeding range is in the northeastern US and Canada, west to Oregon, they make a round-trip 12,500 miles to South America. One nine-year old female bobolink presumably made this trip annually, which is like running around the Earth on the Equator 4.5 times.
- The Bobolink undergoes two complete molts each year, both on the breeding and wintering grounds.
- Emily Dickinson once wrote a poem about a bobolink that went like this:

*The Bobolink is gone — The Rowdy of the Meadow —
And no one swaggers now but me —
The Presbyterian Birds can now resume the Meeting
He gaily interrupted that overflowing Day
When opening the Sabbath in their afflictive Way
He bowed to Heaven instead of Earth
And shouted Let us pray —*

Where the Illinois Young Birders Saw Bobolinks
Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie, near
Wilmington and Elwood, Illinois.

Purcell Interview cont'd from page 8

being drafted into the army, I dumbly thought to myself, "What birds are you going to see in Chicago? You won't see anything." We once had a Scarlet tanager in the courtyard of my building and I considered that just a fluke. Then I read in the paper that Douglas Anderson was having bird walks at the zoo. So I went up there. I said, "Gee, he was seeing birds!" Blue-headed Vireo's and stuff. I couldn't believe it.

So that's when I first realized that Lincoln Park was actually good for birds.

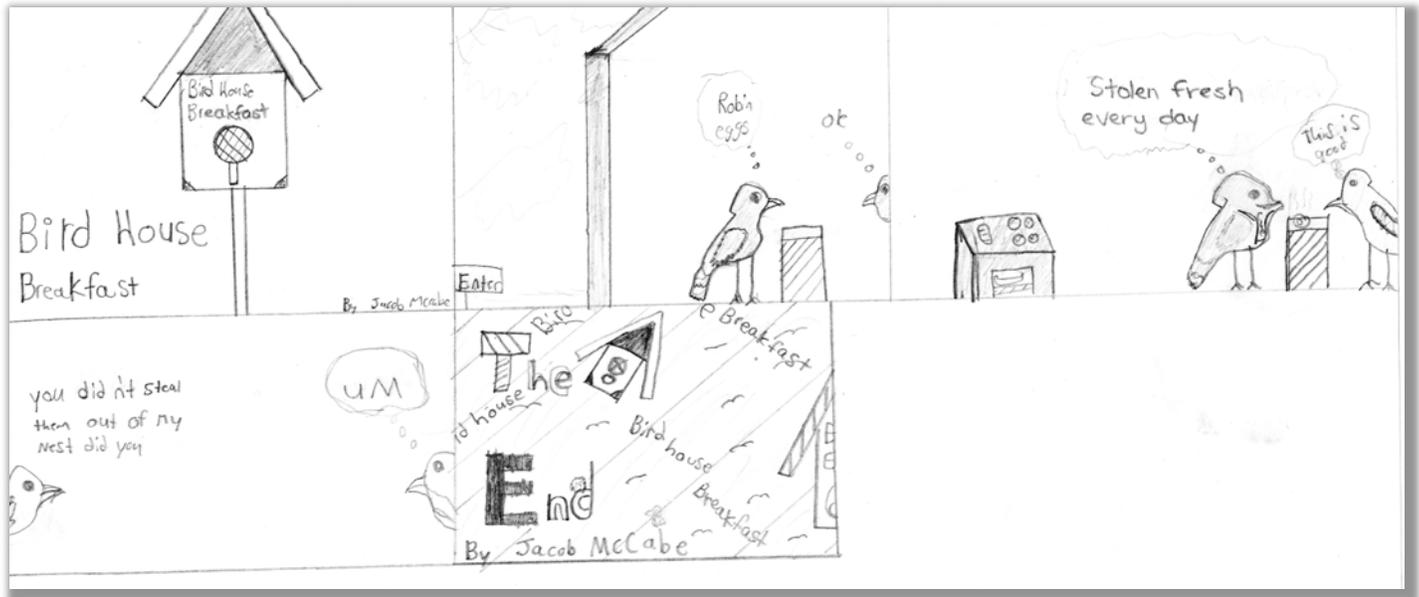
Q. Are there any last words that you would like to say for advice to any young birders out there?

A. It's a great hobby, which I guess is what it is. One thing I've learned though, is never assume something. If you see a bird and say, "Oh, well that must be a so and so." It isn't

necessarily. I've been surprised. I remember once at North Pond, there was a tan bag up in the treetops, a grocery bag like thing. And I got closer and looked at it again, and it was an American Bittern. Right up in the treetop! Never assume. Learning bird songs is also important. You can see a lot more birds if your ears are good and hear it and you know what they are.

Thanks to all who have supported ILYB and, particularly, to our contributors to this first edition of *The Hoot*!

Cheep Jokes



Cartoon by Jacob McCabe

Welcome to our ILYB Members

ILYB Charter Members

Soren Aldridge*
 Jake Cvetas
 Nandu Dubey
 Sulli Gibson*
 Tobias Ginsberg
 Nathan Goldberg*
 Aaron Gyllenhaal
 Ethan Gyllenhaal
 Nate Kraemer
 Jack McCabe
 Jacob McCabe

Lucy Oglesby
 Dakota Outcalt
 Ari Rice
 Connor Ross*
 Owen Shipley
 Edward Warden*

Partner Members

DuPage Birding Club
 Evanston North-Shore Bird Club
 Illinois Audubon

Supporting Adult Members

John Adams
 Kristin DaPra-McCabe
 Eric Gyllenhaal
 Paul & Brenda Hart
 Lynne Remington
 Joanne Skoglund
 Victoria Sroczynski
 Craig Taylor

* Indicates member of Youth Advisory Council

Special thanks to our parent organization, the Illinois Ornithological Society!

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