



# The Hoot

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## The Adventure Continues. . .

I am continually surprised on each of our field trips when something is seen that perhaps wasn't sought, and as a result I end up experiencing new and exciting things. This happens often because young people are intensely aware of their environment and frequently notice things that most of us might miss. Although we are a birding club, we are also witness to much more than just birds. Most recently this occurred on our trip to the Fraker Farm in Woodford County, where we were amazed to find 5 species of snakes, including a first ever Red-bellied Snake. Birds are a great way to introduce people to nature. Once someone starts paying attention to birds, they soon find that there are many more mysteries waiting to be discovered all around them.

This issue marks our first in Volume II. It also is the first to be published since I have moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. Our next issue will introduce you to the new leadership of ILYB, but for now I want to share how proud I am of this club and of all its members. I will miss you all and hope you have enjoyed all that ILYB has to offer. I thank you for allowing me to be a part of it all.

Cheers,  
Brian Herriott, ILYB Adult Coordinator



### Adventures in Birdland

Illinois Young Birders continue to have wonderful birding adventures both inside and outside of Illinois. In "Adventures in Birdland," read about some of their birding adventures outside the state.

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## Member Spotlight: Ethan Gyllenhaal

Young Birder, Ethan Gyllenhaal, is a veteran birder with an impressive breadth of experience birding in Illinois. ILYB coordinator, Brian Herriott, interviews Ethan about his passion for birding.

Q: I know that you and your brother have seen more birds in Illinois than most adult birders. What are some of your favorite Illinois birding experiences?

A: I've got lots of favorites, but one of my favorite experiences was last year at Monroe Harbor when thousands of gulls of 6 species (including tons of Thayer's) were swirling around directly in front of me, allowing great flight and sitting looks, despite the snow. For non-gulls, I loved the minor "fallout" at Montrose that produced 28 species of warblers in a small area. I also love going on the Carlyle Pelagic, but the Gull Frolic has to be my favorite event of the year!

Q: What are your favorite Illinois birding sites? Birds?

A: My favorite birding site last year

was at Monroe Harbor, due to the optimal viewing conditions for the gulls. However, North Point Marina is reliably good, and I love it there! There is also Gilson Park, where I love to go for lakewatching. And, of course, I love Montrose for its diverse habitats. Outside of the Chicago region, the Illinois River's shorebird sites are very fun in the summer. My favorite group of birds is definitely gulls (especially the Iceland complex), with shorebirds, warblers, and waterbirds seen while lakewatching all at the top of my list.

Q: You love Gulls? Why?

A: I love gulls for many reasons, but the one that I love the most is the taxonomic complexity and individual variation that make gulling constantly interesting. It also interests me how much they

change over time. I believe that they are stunning birds in all stages of life (excluding bleached 1st cycles), and are very underrated due to being associated with parking lots and mindnumbing ID challenges.

Q: If you had to convince a friend of yours to give birding a try, how would you sell it to him/her?

A: The part of birding that seems to interest people the most is the listing aspect, as they are impressed with just how many species are out there, more than they every imagined. Something that can help trap them into birding would be the thought that one day they can ID birds from 1-noted calls and short glimpses through the trees or as they zoom overhead.

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*Gyllenhaal Interview cont'd from page 2*

Q: What U.S. state do you most wish to go birding in? What foreign country?

A: I really want to go birding in New York, especially Niagara Falls. Niagara has epic gull concentrations, and the best gull totals in the US. There is also the coast, which not only had passerine migrants, but also amazing seawatching, which turns up thousands of scoters and other ducks along with the occasional treat like an alcid, jaeger, or rare gull.

Q: For someone just starting birding, what advice would you give?

A: One key piece of advice is that they shouldn't give up on birding, no matter how frustrating it gets. Sparrows gradually become some of the easier birds to ID, those shape of distant hawks or ducks will become the best ID mark, shorebirding will become a process of spotting the difference, and gulls will gradually cease to be an enigma. Also, that "confusing fall warblers" and "impossible to ID sparrows" are just your mind working against you. They aren't that tough once you learn the field marks.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 15 years?

A: In 5 years, I see myself at a good college, majoring in bio, and making the best of campus birding. In 15 years, I see myself as part of a birding community, even if it isn't IL, but the rest is too soon to tell.

Q: What is your 'Most Wanted' Bird?

A: "Most want bird" is a tough thing to decide. Most wanted gull is probably the Caspian Gull of Europe,

a taxonomical problem with a very distinct shape. Also, seeing a 1st cycle alternate Ross's Gull, which is possibly the best small gull in the world. Other than gulls, birds like Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Snow Petrel, all Antpittas, and the stunning Tanagers of the tropics are all high up on my list. In the US, I really want to see Colima \*shakes fist\* and Townsend's Warblers to finish up my warbler list.

Q: Tell us about your other hobbies/interests?

A: One of my favorite non-birding things to do is spend lots of time on the internet, especially one site called Reddit, which allows me to keep up to date with world news, have witty or serious discussions with other members, and just few some of the funny things the internet has to offer.

Q: Who is your favorite 'Dr. Who' actor?

A: My favorite actor is definitely David Tennant, for his many amazing, dramatic performances of the Doctor while mixing in some more playful things without going overboard. Matt Smith is also great, but his Doctor tends to be very bipolar, switching from the playful cheery Doctor he is most of the time to one minute or dramatic speech. Other great actors and actresses include John Barrowman, Katherine Tate, Karen Gillian, and Arthur Darvill.

# Adventures in Birdland

## Wildlife Out West

written by Connor Ross, ILYB member



Well, we just got back from a trip out West two weeks ago, and we actually saw some pretty interesting wildlife.

Entering Wyoming, we started to see what I guess to be Oregon or American pronghorns (*Antilocapra americana americana/oregona*), with a grand tally of anywhere from 12 to 25 individuals by the time we exited Utah into Nevada. As we entered Utah at a rest stop, Mom took a wrong turn onto an exit, and luckily, we caught sight of a large colony of prairie dogs. They are several subspecies; Utah, Gunnison's, white-tailed, and black-tailed, but as I was unable to catch sight of their tails, since they were in the middle of some sage and dry brush, I could not identify them. As we moved further into Utah, we passed by a lake and a waterfall created by a dam. In the lake, I could see a flock of American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) on the water, and, as a

rare sighting, a female Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*) taking a drink from the water!

The animal sightings didn't end there, however. We went to the Salt Lake, where there was a bunch of dead bird corpses lying around. We did see some live birds in the surrounding pools however; yellow-headed blackbirds, pied-billed grebes, and Canadian geese. Before reaching California, we stopped a night and day and night in Nevada; we went to Virginia City, where we saw some lizards and tassel-eared squirrels, and leaving, even a few Gambel's quails! By the time we got to California, I could see all the Joshua trees surrounding us. We went to Santa Monica beach during midday, and we saw a bunch of gulls (different species from the local ones, but I suck at identifying gulls xD) and pigeons trying to pick off some food; I gave some of the birds graham crackers. I was lucky enough to see some brown pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) in the distance, including some even performing their divebomb feeding technique! That means I've seen 1/4 of all pelican species in the world (in the wild) and I hope that I'll see some more in my lifetime!

There wasn't much different wildlife in San Diego, though we did see some more pelicans closer up at the beach on our last day. Grand Canyon wildlife

was interesting; we saw two of the species of squirrels: Kaibab and some other species I can't remember. xD We saw some common ravens on the canyon walls, and then I saw the biggest surprise at all that I did not identify until about a week after we were home, a rare, wild California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*)!!!

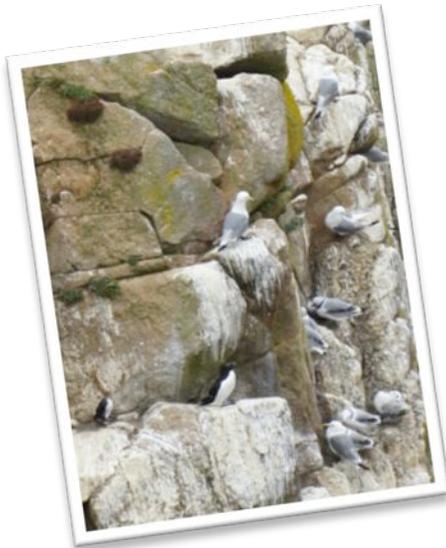
We also saw some other wildlife; a mule deer doe, either a raccoon or fox crossing the road on a late Colorado night, and some other animals.

I have recently been to Ireland and saw many birds that were new to me if only because I had never been to Europe before. The first bird I saw when I got off the plane in Dublin was a house sparrow, which was a bit disappointing. But then we (my dad and I) saw some black-headed gulls, which were very common, but as I said I had never been to Europe before so it was all new to me. On the lawn of the hotel there were Magpies, which were not the kind of Magpies we have here and a Blackbird walking on the lawn, along with some pigeons. AS we walked around we thought we might have heard a Dunnok, but we weren't sure, and also saw Sand Martins. And along with that we saw jackdaws in numbers, and one wood pigeon. And that was our first day of birding in Ireland.

The next day we took a train down to Limerick, and at one of the stops we saw House Martins fly out of a hole in a building.

At Limerick, we picked up a car, than we drove from the rental to a large castle and folk park which was full of Rooks, which are large crow-like birds with white bills. Then

we saw a flock of house sparrows with a few birds with white wing bars integrated in. We got the book out and decided they were chaffinches, a common bird throughout Britain and



Ireland and I think maybe Europe. We also saw Coal Tits, which are small birds that look pretty similar to Chickadees. Above us we saw swifts flying back and forth as swifts will do. At the same place we saw a Robin and some great tits.

The next eventful day of birding was when took

a ferry out to some islands in the ocean. We saw our first sea birds, Gannets, a huge white bird with a yellow head that flew and dived around us. Then we saw the Black Guillemots, smallish black auks with white wing patches and red feet, as well as Shags, a kind of cormorant. We were hoping to see puffins nesting on the cliff, but the weather was bad and we could not see well enough over the edge of the island to make them out.

Our last major (and I mean major) birding area was the Saltee Islands. We drove out to the coast from Waterford and boarded a ferry. On the way to the island we watched gannets



dive. When we got on the island the first thing we saw was a few small brown birds that we could not identify, then a warbler that we

could not identify either. we got to the side of the island. Wow, on that side there were birds

galore. Large colonies of Kittiwakes lined the cliffs, with a few Fulmars mixed in. we saw a Razorbill, a kind of auk, with a chick. Then we kept walking and saw small black dots floating in the water. We looked through binoculars, and discovered it was a flock of Puffins! We watched the Puffins a while, then moved on to the gannet colony. It is huge! If you think the gull colonies we have here are big, you should see the Gannets, it was amazing. We also saw some choughs, which are essentially crows with red feet and beaks.

So that was my first European and Irish birding experience. I guess if you have never been to Europe before then Ireland is a good place to start. It is also amazing for seabirds. Anyway, signing off. Good luck and good birding.

# Walking With the Seabirds: My Experience at Project Puffin

*written by Aaron Gyllenhaal, ILYB member*

As soon as I step out of the van, I am enveloped by the beauty of Hog Island. The sloshing of the waves against the rocky shore is very soothing in a way. All of my anxiety suddenly leaves my body and I am overwhelmed by excitement. Once I get on the boat, a Merlin flies right over, and a couple seconds later, I spot my first Black Guillemot. From that moment, I knew this would be a magical experience.

The first day was amazing. I was so excited about seeing more of this place. We went on a boat trip, learned about ornithology, and went to a beautiful hilltop in a blueberry barren. The second day we went on a hike around Hog Island and went bird banding, during which I got to hear a Northern Parula's heartbeat. The third day was the one I was looking forward to, Eastern Egg Rock. There were seabirds everywhere here and it was an incredibly fascinating place. The fourth and last full day, we went



to an amazing town where you can see anything from a little amphibian called a Red Eft to Northern Parulas feeding in trees above you. Every

morning there were optional walks and after dinner there were programs given by the staff.

My absolute favorite part of the trip was Eastern Egg Rock. The second I stepped on this seabird breeding colony to the second I stepped off of it, the mystery of these birds never faded, in

fact, it grew. Just seeing the puffins on the rock put my faith back into conservation efforts. In my mind, these puffins are the embodiment how conservation efforts are crucial in this world, and that they can be incredibly successful. These puffins

were reintroduced to this island after being extirpated a long time ago, and now they are thriving more than ever. Other amazing birds there include Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns, Black Guillemot, and Common Eider. Uncommon birds we saw were Red Knot, Short-Billed Dowitcher, Razorbill, Northern Gannet, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, and Parasitic Jaeger.

This experience really changed me as a birder. When I got to the island, I was more focused on seeing lots of birds, and when I left, I started to enjoy the beauty of every bird, even Pigeons. Now, I also closely observe birds instead of watching them. This has

really helped me with learning how to recognize confusing birds. I now use behavior and body shape to identify birds instead of just the coloring, patterning, and



calls. In some cases, I know how to find bird better because of this. For example, in Chicago, a Least Bittern was being seen at a pond, and I was having trouble finding it. After I went a few times, I knew more about this particular bird's behavior and could find it much easier than before.

Project Puffin, like all things, is good in some ways and bad in others. The

pros of it are: beautiful scenery and weather, very educational, great birds, and great people to share this all with. When used to I think





# Trip Reports

## Kane County/ Nelson Lake July 30, 2011

I had the pleasure of leading several members of the Illinois Young Birders Club around some of the Kane County sites on July 30<sup>th</sup>. The original plan was to target several shorebird spots, but heavy rains earlier in the week washed out some of our target areas. Regardless, it was a fun (and hot) outing with several good birds.

The first stop was Nelson Lake. A view from the observation platform produced a few Wood Ducks, Pied-billed Grebe, distant shorebirds, and a Killdeer doing a nice Black Tern impression. Marsh Wrens and Swamp Sparrows could be heard singing from the reeds. The north end of the marsh did produce some shorebirds, including 2 Solitary Sandpipers, 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers, and 5 Least Sandpipers. We did not relocate a Baird's that had been seen there earlier. In all, Nelson Lake produced 32 species.

The next stop was Aurora West. If anyone wants to see or hear Willow Flycatchers, this is the spot. A

conservative estimate totaled 15 individuals. The other big highlight was a Bell's Vireo. It was seen a few times, and cooperatively sang as well. Unfortunately, the heat was building, and some of the other specialties at this spot remained quiet. There were 19 species at Aurora West.

A quick stop at Sauer FP did not produce the hoped-for Western Meadowlark, but we promptly picked that up at the Kaneville Sod farm. This bird was particularly rewarding. There was some friendly debate going on about Eastern vs. Western when the bird promptly sang, removing any doubt. I believe it was a life bird for a couple trip participants.

From there it was on to our last stop, Elburn FP. The slough across the street contained breeding

Common Moorhens, and several of us were able to get nice views of both adult and juvenile birds. After scoping to see if there were any hidden shorebirds or rails, it was time for a nice picnic lunch in the shade of the pavilion. I think everyone was happy to sit in the shade and relax for a bit.

A similar trip was planned at the same time last year. Unfortunately, it was entirely flooded out. This

year we did get the trip in, though shorebirds were certainly affected by the weather during the week. One of these years we will actually get to do some shorebirding!



*Written by Scott Cohrs  
Photos by Denise  
Haberkorn*

## Chautauqua Forest Preserve and Havana Area Shorebird trip August 14, 2011



The Illinois Young Birders field trip to the Emiquon Preserve and Chautauqua Refuge produced a nice tally of shorebirds on a beautiful, sunny day. We started the morning with a brief stop at the observation platform at Emiquon Preserve overlooking Thompson Lake. We immediately found a small flock of Eurasian Tree Sparrows, a couple hundred American White Pelicans, some Great Egrets, and a flyby Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The only shorebird at this location was Killdeer.

We then headed to Chautauqua where we spend a majority of the



morning.

We quickly added Pectoral Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs, and soon thereafter Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, and Greater Yellowlegs. Highlights were a very obliging White-rumped

Sandpiper and a Black-bellied Plover. The sight and smell of the thousands of dead fish was quite overpowering at times, but thankfully the wind was strong enough to keep the smell away from us on Goofy Ridge. The equally impressive sight of thousands of White Pelicans was also quite stunning. We also added Semipalmated Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird here.

The Gyllenhaal's had found nice habitat south of Rte. 136 on 1900E just east of Havana the day before and we found a very pale Semipalmated Sandpiper here which we tried to make into a Sanderling or maybe a Stint of some kind. We studied this bird for a while and came to the conclusion that it was just a pale Semipalmated Sandpiper. Many thanks Matthew Winks and Dr. Angelo Capparella for helping us with this bird.

At Sand Lake we added Black-necked Stilt, Ruddy Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe. No sign of the Eared Grebe. The day before, we found a family of Common Gallinules here.



On my way home I received a text from the Gyllenhaal's that they had found some more good habitat at 2100E and

1500N. After filling up with gas, I joined up with them and we added Red-necked Phalarope, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Stilt Sandpiper.

Many thanks to Ted Hartzler for volunteering his time and expertise to help lead this field trip for ILYB. Thanks also to Ethan and Aaron Gyllenhaal, and Colin Dobson, for providing such excellent company throughout the day.

We ended with a tally of 16 shorebird species.

*Photos by Ethan Gyllenhaal*

## Fraker Farm Trip September 18, 2011



On September 17, I met Brian Herriott and a small group of the Illinois Young Birders at TGIF's. We were going on a field outing the next day. Brian and I stayed up a little later watching a surprising Illini victory over 18th ranked Arizona State in the Doubletree Lounge.

Sunday morning broke dreary and wet -- this could only mean one thing -- Fraker must be leading a bunch of out of town guests into the Field. I'm going to hire myself out to places suffering severe drought. Let me plan a bird adventure where I lead at least 15 people and we will get it to rain like Hell.

We had a good crew of youngsters and parents that numbered 16. As I did not get any parent's permission to post names or photographs of

our crew, I will leave that up to the club itself if they would like to add pictures and information to this thread.

We started at Ewing Park looking for Fall migrants. We immediately ran into Dale Birkenholz who was less than encouraging about the scene here. We then ran into Les Allen who joined our clan and eventually migrants started dropping in out of the mist for our entertainment. One of the first birds we found for pretty decent looks was a wonderful Olive-sided Flycatcher. After scouring through a couple of other feeding flocks, we headed out to our next stop at the south side of Evergreen Lake. Here we had a Lesser Yellowlegs and a nicely posed Osprey, among some other day birds.

Following a quick empty stop at the Spillway, we drove up to El

Paso, car pooled ourselves down to three vehicles and went to the El Paso Sewage Lagoons where misty winds hindered our viewing. We just barely managed some Pectorals, a single Semipalmated Sandpiper and a lone Buff-breasted Sandpiper found by Brian. The little sandy flat that has been so productive had been drained and groomed rendering it devoid.

Next it was off to the Fraker Farm for a much needed Avanti's lunch. The weather broke a bit for us and we took to the Farm for a nice long nature loop. With the rain and cool temps I was skeptical about our snake finding chances and expected to whip through our walk.

I was not prepared for a five species snake day...and this completely compensated for the weather and the sketchy birding. We have never had five species in a run.

*Written by Matt Fraker*



# Adult Birder Spotlight

ILYB member Nathan Goldberg interviews John Vanderpoel, who is doing a Big Year in 2011.

Q: When did you first start birding and how did you get interested in birds?

A: My Dad and my Uncle Bob both established the core foundation by nurturing an appreciation for wildlife and plants when I was young. In 1965, my parents moved from Des Plaines, IL to Barrington, IL. We had five acres out in the country with a large oak grove. One rainy day during that fall migration, my brothers and I experienced a warbler fallout. That sealed the deal for me.

Q: What are some of your most memorable experiences involving birds?

A: My first trip to Alaska included over two weeks on Gambell where I filmed gulls for the **Large Gulls of North America** video. Watching half a million birds fly by each afternoon was mind boggling.

Q: What is your favorite bird in North America? World?

A: I don't know that I have a favorite, but I'm becoming increasingly drawn to and fascinated by these petrels. I didn't realize that Bermuda Petrel will fly from Bermuda all the way to the Grand Banks to feed their young! Hawaiian Petrel leaves it's breeding colony on a Hawaiian Island and flies to Northern California to gather food then takes it back to it's chicks. That must be at least a

three thousand mile round trip just to feed the young!

Q: How many birds are on your ABA life list? World?

A: I began this year with a modest 706 species. I believe that Gunnison Sage-Grouse was 742. I hope to end the year in the 750's.

Q: What is it like to do a Big Year? How do you plan for it, especially with the drop everything rarities?

A: There is a good deal of planning involved initially. You also need a thorough understanding of distribution and migration timing. Two days can make a difference in successfully seeing the bird or not. With such tools as e-bird and all the listserves available today, it's easier than it would have been 15 years ago. As you know I was very fortunate to be able to fly free (albeit standby) on thirteen trips between June 15 and August 24. That was a tremendous benefit. Last thing-to do a Big Year right. You must be decisive on any chase. Wait a day and you'll likely pay the price, at least in migration. Once the birds settle down on their wintering grounds it's a different story. I was able to plan my trips for both the Bean Goose and the Brown Shrike.

Q: Are you trying to break the record for the most birds seen in one year, or are you doing this for fun?

A: I'm having fun doing this Big Year. The Quest for a Thousand has been surprisingly entertaining. But don't think for a second that I'm not going all out at this point. When I return from AK, I'll chase any and all rarities that show up. I hope to be able to return to Texas, Arizona and Florida (if you know what I mean).

Q: What got you motivated to do a Big Year?

A: I became interested in someday doing a Big Year back in the early 90's. But I needed to focus on The Advanced Birding Video Series with Jon Dunn. Everything fell into place for this year to be THE YEAR.

Q: If you had to list 3 reasons for someone to become a birder, what would they be?

A: Anyone who appreciates nature is likely to gravitate to birds. They're visible, audible and colorful. The fascination for me is in migration and the excitement is in finding rare birds that don't belong in a particular area.

Q: What bird do you want to see more than any other?

A: Certainly this year at the top of the list would be a Short-tailed Albatross. I've got a possible adventure coming in November. That's all for now.

# Reaching Out to Educate Others About Birding...

Recently, Nathan Goldberg and Edward Warden, ILYB members, took time out of their schedules to speak to school kids about birding.



Photos by Lynne Remington

## *Puffins cont'd from page 6*

of Maine, I thought of looking out over the ocean when it is very foggy and seeing treetops peeking out through the fog. This was not the case whatsoever. The sun was shining for the first three days and that magical Maine fog was only displayed on the fourth day. The breathtaking scenery

is beyond words, it's just so gorgeous. I learned how to record bird songs, to track migration, how birds communicate in flight, identify birds by silhouettes, and the history of this amazing island. I got a total of five life birds and countless memories that will always stay with me. What fun would

this be without a great attitude and willingness to learn? That is what everybody had. The only con to this experience is that the second you leave this island, you want to go back. I guess there is always next year.



WHOA!!! My  
first Red-bellied  
Snake!!!

Welcome to our  
new ILYB  
Members:

ILYB Members

Eddie Kasper

Supporting Adult Members

Jeff Reiter

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