

Hickory Hills Highlights

**News from the Hickory Hills Chapter of the
Illinois Audubon Society, Stewards of Bremer
Sanctuary**

SUMMER / FALL EDITION 2014



UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 9, 5:30 PM. . .OWL PROWL & WIENER ROAST

BRING YOUR OWN HOTDOGS, BUNS AND A DISH TO SHARE

**NOVEMBER 15, 5:00 PM. . .IAS PRAIRIE CHICKEN RECOVERY PROGRAM &
POTLUCK DINNER**

**GUEST SPEAKER BOB GILLESPIE PRESENTS AN INFORMATIVE PROGRAM REGARDING THE
RESTORATION EFFORT OF THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN. BRING A DISH OR TWO TO SHARE.**

**JANUARY 1, 2015 7:30 AM. . .ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY WALK
FOLLOWED BY BISCUITS & GRAVY.**

NEWS FROM THE BLUEBIRD TRAIL

BY JERRY PRATER

As most of you are aware, the volunteers of Bremer Sanctuary monitor and maintain a lengthy bluebird trail around the perimeter of the grounds. In total there are forty-six houses with more to come.

Member Vicki Hedrick who manned the trail for many years has left the area. Volunteer Nancy Redman has assumed the duty assisted this year by Willie Fry. Rain or shine, the trail is monitored via the golf cart with each box being checked for eggs, hatchlings or fledglings. All pertinent information is logged and tallied in a master book kept at The Barn. This information includes such unfortunate activity such as animal predation (including suspicion of snake incursion and disappearance of eggs or hatchlings).

Sad to say, this year there have been a number of nests and eggs that have mysteriously disappeared and some boxes found open. Although there are numerous signs along the trail asking that boxes not be opened, it appears that human intervention has to be suspected.

So, we ask again, “PLEASE enjoy the bluebird trail but DO NOT tamper with the inhabitants.”

Back to trail monitoring: It is about this time of year that all the monthly monitoring –March through August—is tallied and reported to the Eastern Central Illinois Bluebird Society in Paris, Illinois. The ECIBS receives information on eggs/hatchlings & fledglings from across the South-Central Illinois region which it then forwards to the North American Bluebird Society in Bloomington, Indiana.

By this time the trail monitoring is basically over for the year. Any remaining nesting birds are left to complete the rite. As fall and winter approach, volunteers will ride the trail cleaning each box, spraying for any remaining insects and inspecting for needed repairs. A number of boxes have been in use for several years and will be replaced or repaired. New boxes are planned for vacant T-posts. There has been some discussion of moving some boxes further into the prairie grasses and potentially adding a line of new boxes across the middle of the southeast field (currently under renovation).



The thought process here is to discourage house wrens from occupying too many bluebird homes as well as attracting more spring males to nest sites.

A final note about box styles: Bremer utilizes at least three different box styles. The most prevalent is the popular square box with a circle opening and a side door, but also have several with a slot opening for the entrance.. There are a few “Peterson” boxes around the trail. The Peterson style is a tall triangular shaped box with a forward slanting front designed by Roger Tory Peterson. This style normally has a vertical oval opening near the lid.

Fortunately, bluebirds nest whenever they like so all styles we use have produced fledglings.

The public is invited, and encouraged to hike the trail and enjoy the wonders of Bremer Sanctuary.

QUICK FACTS REGARDING THE 2014 BLUEBIRD TRAIL MONITORING

BLUEBIRDS:	153 EGGS	95 HATCHED	89 FLEDGED
TREE SWALLOWS:	48 EGGS	42 HATCHED	22 FLEDGED
HOUSE WRENS:	113 EGGS	67 HATCHED	53 FLEDGED

40 OF THE 46 BOXES CONTAINED NESTS FOR THE 2014 BREEDING SEASON.

26 OF THE 46 BOXES ON THE PROPERTY WERE USED BY BLUEBIRDS, EITHER EXCLUSIVELY OR SPLIT WITH OTHER BIRDS.

ON THE JUNE 19TH NESTBOX MONITORING, BUFFALO FLIES/GNATS HAD CLAIMED THE LIVES OF 20 TREE SWALLOWS & 3 WRENS.



MAINTAINING BREMER PROPERTY

THERE IS ALWAYS PLENTY TO DO AT THE SANCTUARY. BOB MULLINS (TOP LEFT) INSPECTS THE PROPERTY ON THE GATOR, WHILE JERRY PRATER (BOTTOM LEFT) INSURES THE GROUNDS ARE IN TIP-TOP SHAPE WITH THE RIDING MOWER.

THE NEW ENTRANCE SIGN, DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED BY RON GAZDA, POINTS VISITORS IN THE PROPER DIRECTION.



THIS PHOTO TITLED "PURPLE CONEFLOWER'S SOFT REFLECTIONS" TAKEN BY GERI A. KINNAMAN AT BREMER PLACED 1ST IN ITS CLASS AT THE OLD SETTLER'S ART & PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW. THIS IS HER SECOND PHOTO THAT HAS PLACED IN THIS ANNUAL CONTEST. SEVERAL OF HER OTHER PHOTOS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE STATE JOURNAL REGISTER.

LITTLE FREE LIBRARY BY PAVEL SLEPICKA

"With the addition of a new Little Free Library outside the barn of Bremer Sanctuary north of Hillsboro, guests can broaden their reading interests while visiting the conservation area. The invitation is simple – take a book, return a book.

The idea for this sharing system began in 2009 when, according to the website www.littlefreelibrary.org, Todd Bol of Hudson, WI, built a scale model of a one-room schoolhouse in tribute to his mother, a former school teacher who loved reading. He filled it with books and put it on a post in his front yard with the sign, "Free Books." Neighbors and friends loved it, so Bol built several more and gave them away. He then partnered with Rich Brooks of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to spread Bol's idea via youth and community development and social media.

Growth over the years has been tremendous, with approximately 15,000 registered Little Free Library locations around the world as of January 2014. The one at Bremer honors the late Richard Slepicka of Hillsboro. "Richard had a passion for literature, evidenced by his opening

of a book store, So Many Books (now Books & Moore), his founding of a local book club, and his 'second job' as an instructor of literature for Lincoln Land Community College," said project organizer Terry Trader.

"The Little Free Library offers a way to honor Richard by carrying on his efforts to promote literacy and an appreciation for literature. He was also passionate about nature and had served on the Bremer Sanctuary board," Trader said. "By locating the Little Free Library at Bremer, it is hoped that more people will visit the Sanctuary and will use and cherish a natural resource that Montgomery County is so very lucky to have."

Trader said that both nonfiction and fiction books are welcome, including nature, history, biographies, sci-fi, poetry, even westerns – Louis L'Amour was a favorite author on Richard's light reading list.

"Books were Richard's passion throughout his life," said his wife, Nancy. "And Bremer Sanctuary became his focus after we retired from the newspaper. I know he'd be pleased to see this Little Free Library at his favorite place."



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY IN MEMORY OF RICHARD SLEPICKA.

PHOTO LEFT TO RIGHT:
RON GAZDA, DESIGNER & BUILDER OF THE "MINI BARN" LIBRARY
TERRY TRADER, ORGANIZER
NANCY & PAVEL SLEPICKA

NOTABLE ANNIVERSARIES

By Jerry Prater

This fall we both celebrate and feel saddened by two momentous events in American natural history.

On September 3 1964, then President Lyndon B. Johnson, signed into law The Wilderness Act. Howard Zahniser (a graduate of Greenville College) is considered the primary author and driving force behind the creation of the act.

The Wilderness Act is designed to protect & preserve public lands in the U.S. not trammled or previously developed by man. Visitors are meant to come and enjoy, but not remain within the boundaries, as established by the bill.

There are currently 106 million acres of federally protected lands in forty-four states. The National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the BLM are charged with administering the lands. The bill requires an act of Congress to remove or alter the status of any lands set aside under the act.

Sadly, Howard Zahniser, who also served as secretary, editor and eventually as executive director of The Wilderness Society, did not live to see his work completed. Zahniser died at age 62 just four months before President Johnson signed the bill into law.

“A Feathered River Across the Sky” is a new book by Joel Greenberg detailing the life and death of the passenger pigeon.

One hundred years ago, Martha, the last remaining passenger pigeon died on September 1, 1914 in a Cincinnati, Ohio zoo marking the end of a species once numbered in the billions. Even though the pigeon was an important part of the Native American diet, the ruthless over hunting of the bird, eventually drove it to extinction.



While locally abundant in the Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes region, their range extended as far west as the Dakotas and eastern Montana and upwards into the mid Canadian provinces. Their diet consisted of a variety of insects but the favorite was acorns, berries and beech nuts. They were also not immune to raiding crop fields for corn and wheat. Seasonal production of natural foodstuffs required migration resulting in the enormous flocks that were said to blot out the sun. Audubon reported that it took three days for a flock to pass during his 1813 trip from Henderson, Kentucky to Louisville, a distance of only 122 miles.

With the death of Martha, an era passed that we will surely never see again. Billions faded to one and then blinked out.

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THE BREMER BARN IS SPORTING A NEW LOOK. THANKS TO JIM YOUNT AND HIS CARPENTRY SKILLS. JIM HAS REPLACED THE DOUBLE SWING-OUT FRONT DOOR AND THE REAR DOOR.

VICKI'S NEW ADVENTURE

By Nancy Redman & Vicki Hedrick

Bremer's longtime volunteer and friend, Vicki Hedrick of Carlinville, has spread her wings and flown the coop!! In mid-June, Vicki and her husband, Keith, packed up their belongings and moved to Arizona. And who can blame her....We will all be thinking about her when we are shoveling snow this winter. I have kept in contact with my "birding advisor" via email and asked her to send a description regarding her new habitat. The following is an excerpt from that email.



"We are on an airpark and the house and hangar are attached. My studio is being built into the house right now. We are on a low mesa surrounded by other mesas and nearby mountains. Our elevation is 3500 feet and are located 45 miles south of Flagstaff and 90 miles north of Phoenix in the unincorporated village of Rimrock. Sedona, and its beautiful red rock formations, is a 40 minute drive northwest. Ecologically we are in a transition zone - just north of the Senoran Desert, at the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau and just below the Mogollon Rim. While we are desert scrub, we are just minutes from pine forests at 7000 feet and even fewer minutes from riparian habitat along the Verde River and are part of the Verde Valley. Wet Beaver Creek which flows all year and drains into the Verde River is nearby. Yes, there is a Dry Beaver Creek which is mostly dry! We are in a rich area for Native American archaeology with petroglyphs and pictographs as well as cliff dwellings and other types of dwellings nearby. Montezuma's Well and Montezuma's Castle are within minutes of our home. You can check out these tourist attractions on the Internet. Because of all the different habitats and elevations so close, birding is fantastic. Some of my feeder birds so far include Western Scrub Jay, Northern Cardinal, Canyon Towhee, House Sparrow, House Finch, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird (during their southbound summer migration), Gambel's Quail, Eurasian-Collared Dove, Black-throated Sparrow. Other birds on my 3.5 acres include Roadrunner, Crissal Thrasher, Blue Grosbeak, Verdin, Lesser Goldfinch, Hooded Oriole, Kestrel, Mourning Dove, and Cooper's Hawk. Haven't seen a rattlesnake here yet, but we had a tarantula on the deck, a scorpion in the hangar and the biggest centipedes imaginable. We're loving it. The Grand Canyon is just a 2 hour drive!"

The Hickory Hills Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society is governed by a Board of Directors. The following are members of this Board:

Jerry Prater – IAS Chapter Representative, Newsletter

Henry Eilers - Restoration

Jim Hefley - Bluebird Trail, Building, Restoration

Gale Johnson - Building

Geri Kinnaman – Education Chairperson, Secretary

Don Krefft – Treasurer & Restoration

Sonya Lockett – Bulletin Board

Dick Rompasky - Building

Carl Savage – Membership Chairperson

Ken Schaal – Restoration Chairperson

Nancy Redman - Bluebird Trail, Newsletter



THIS BLUEBIRD BABY, ALONG WITH 3 OTHER SIBLINGS, IS THE LAST BROOD TO HATCH AND FLEDGE FROM BREMER'S SANCTUARY THIS SEASON. THEY WERE HOUSED IN BOX #37 AND LEFT THEIR NEST SOMETIME DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER.

Join us at Hickory Hills Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society! We are the stewards of IAS' Helen and Betty Bremer Wildlife Sanctuary. Your membership includes the Hickory Hills newsletter, chapter email updates, voting privileges, the opportunity to head a committee or hold an office, Cardinal News, Illinois Audubon Magazine, admission to IAS sanctuaries, and the opportunity to attend chapter and state-wide events.

IAS/HICKORY HILLS CHAPTER NEW MEMBERS FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ St. _____ Zip _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (all categories include chapter dues):

Friend \$ 35 _____ Steward \$ 60+ _____ Advocate \$510+ _____

Friend Plus \$ 40 _____ Guardian \$110+ _____ Benefactor \$1,010+ _____

Legacy \$5,010+ _____

Make check payable to: Illinois Audubon Society, PO Box 2547, Springfield, IL 62708-2457

Or by Credit Card by providing the following information:

Circle: Visa MasterCard Amex Discover

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date (MM) _____ (YYYY) _____

Signature: _____

Please do not use this form to renew your membership. Annual renewals will be sent out by the IAS office approximately one month prior to due date.

You may also join online: <http://www.illinoisaudubon.org/JOIN/Join.html>

OR

You may join Friends of Bremer Sanctuary: yearly membership is \$10 payable directly to membership chair Carl Savage or mailed to Hickory Hills Chapter, PO Box 395 Hillsboro, IL 62049. Membership is due each January 1. A Friend receives the chapter newsletter, email updates (if email address is provided), has sanctuary privileges, is invited to all chapter activities and events and may volunteer for the Sanctuary. A Friend does not have voting rights in chapter business nor can a Friend hold office or chair a committee.