



Jim Hefley sewing his 'wild oats'

# Hickory Hills Highlights

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

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*"Should we not be using this magnificent great 'Cathedral of the outdoors' to learn, then teach?" Jim Sturgeon*

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Most members of the "Sons of Bremer" gather for one of their twice-weekly meetings to make certain the coffee is okay and an attempt is made to eat many of the cookies and donuts on the table. From left are Jerry Prater, Dick Rompasky, Don Krefft, Ken Schaal, Bob Mullins, Jim Hefley, Carl Savage and Gale Johnson. They also discuss work that needs to be done that day and then get to it.

## SOBs Put The Polish On Bremer Sanctuary

by Jerry Prater

STEWARD: A person in charge of a large estate

An administrator of property

One responsible for food and drink

An attendant on a ship or aircraft

Well, three out of four isn't bad.

The stewards of Bremer Sanctuary fully

qualify as persons "in charge"; they are administrators of a large acreage; and, as everyone knows, they certainly are responsible for a continuous supply (and consumption) of cookies, cakes, and coffee.

The Bremer Sanctuary, which is administered by the Hickory Hills Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society (IAS), consists of two hundred and three acres of mixed woodlands, creek frontage, shallow ponds,

and open prairie. Such a large area naturally requires frequent and consistent upkeep by a core group of men and women. In the case of Bremer that means a group of stewards logging more than a hundred collective years of volunteerism.

The first such man was Jim Sturgeon who began in 1990 and was soon followed by Carl Savage in 1992. Dick Rompasky, Gale Johnson, and Jim Hefley joined them in 1999. Later came Ken Schaal, Vicki Hedrick, Richard Slepicka, Don Krefft, Barry Foster, Bob Mullins, Bob Fuehne, and myself, Jerry Prater. Others have come and gone over the years but the aforementioned make up the ongoing core group.

This core represents a variety of backgrounds that contribute to the success of the Bremer operation. All the current volunteers are retired from such areas as mining, business, education, farming, fish-

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## Early Spring Birdwalk Is March 19

Join trip leader Vicki Hedrick for an easy 1½ hour birdwalk Saturday, March 19. The walk will focus on remaining winter visitors, overwintering resident birds and early spring migrants such as Red-winged Blackbirds staking out territories near our ponds.

We will gather at the barn at 7:00 a.m. for coffee and introductory comments.

The walk begins promptly at 7:30 a.m. and will finish by 9.

For those without binoculars, Bremer has a few quality ones available for participants to borrow.

Dress for weather but if severe weather is forecast, listen for announcements on WSMI.

Birders of all levels are welcome.

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## Volunteers Donate Thousands Of Hours, Many In Restoration Work

*Continued from the front page*

eries, banking, construction, and nursing.

And, we can't forget the 'Bluebird Ladies' who monitor fifty nest boxes along a two and a quarter mile bluebird trail every week from mid-April until late September.

A typical year at Bremer might go something like this: Early Spring is the season for controlled burns. Fire is beneficial for prairies. Elementary students arrive in April and May for an outdoor classroom experience. (We have many more volunteers for the outdoor classroom including several retired teachers.)

Weekly mowing and trail maintenance continues throughout the warmer months. Monthly summer events such as bird and flower walks are hosted by the stewards. Fall is Owl Prowl time and time to begin gathering wood for the winter furnace.

Seed collection occurs after grasses and flowers mature. More controlled burns may occur late fall and early winter for both prairie grasses and woodlands. The New Year begins with an annual New Years Day hike followed by a soup and chili lunch. Seeds collected in the fall are sown by hand in late winter.

In addition to their commitment to the sanctuary, many members also volunteer their time and efforts in multiple community services venues such as Meals-On-Wheels, Sertoma Club, Am Vets, the Lions Club, Big Brother/Sister, and other local boards.

Today's visitors to the sanctuary will find a solid barn structure and a variety of groomed trails. Such was not the case in the early going. Often the original volunteers had to bring their own tools and buy the fuel needed to run equipment. Maintaining the mowed areas around the central barn was done with push mowers. Trail maintenance relied on loppers and hand rakes. Thanks to the support of the Illinois Audubon Society power equipment and financial assistance eases a portion of the burden once borne by the volunteers.

According to IAS Executive Director Tom Clay, the Bremer volunteers are the most active of all the chapters in the state.

The dedicated corps of volunteer stewards meets every Tuesday and Thursday morning for a work or planning session usually lasting about four hours depending on the work required. More volunteers are needed and welcomed as the current group ages.



In the top photo, the Gator was put to another good use as a packhorse for wildflower and grass seed that had been gathered earlier in the fall and stored to dry in the Barn. Carl Savage starts off with another sack while Jim Hefley selects his next bag.

In the middle photo, Jim Hefley, at left, and Jerry Prater, distant right, scatter seed while Dick Rompasky, center, wonders why he ended up with the biggest box of seed.

All the preparation for seed scattering began with an early winter burn of the prairie to be seeded. This is just a small part of the work done by Bremer volunteers.

Photos in this issue courtesy of Don Krefft, Ken Schaal and Carl Savage

To join the Bremer stewards you can contact any of the current members or simply come to the sanctuary any Tuesday or Thursday morning for coffee and get acquainted. No previous experience is

required; you need only to have the desire to protect and maintain a valuable local treasure.

And oh, yes, a good sense of humor is also a good attribute.

## Can You Identify The Bird and Plant for March?



The March Bremer Plant of the Month is a flower, the *Corydalis flavula*, and the Bird for March is the *Melospiza melodia*.

So, now you know. But would you like to know more about them? Then you need to visit Bremer and check the Bulletin Board where hard working volunteer Sonya Luckett has posted this month's Bird and Plant picks and info about them.

Or, you can go to the Bremer Sanctuary website, [www.bremersanctuary.org](http://www.bremersanctuary.org) and get the information there, including a "youtube" link to see and hear the *Melospiza melodia*. (And it really is "melodia.")

The plants and birds featured on these pages and in the Bulletin Board are another way Hickory Hills Chapter volunteers would like to educate you and share the beauty and wonder of the Sanctuary.

Join us today! (Or renew your membership.)



## Join Hickory Hills For A Spring Bird Walk

*And If Henry's There, A Look At Plants That Are Just Poking Their Heads Out*

The Spring Birdwalk to be held Saturday, March 19, will be led by Vicki Hedrick and others and will step off at 7:30 a.m. Plan to meet at The Barn at 7:00 a.m. for coffee and cookies.

If you don't have binoculars, there are

a few good pairs at The Barn to borrow.

Programs are an important part of Hickory Hills Chapter activities. Please support them with your attendance.

Plus, you really learn a lot!

The next program will be Saturday,

April 16 and will be a Woodland Wildflower Walk. The walk will leave The Barn at 1 p.m. Coffee and cookies after. (Snacks are always served at Hickory Hills programs.)

Hope to see you at both programs.

## Hidden Camera Catches Visitors Unaware

Bremer volunteer Carl Savage got a fancy motion sensitive camera for Christmas and so he put it out where it might catch some wildlife. In the photo at right, deer visit the bird feeders in back of the barn during the day when no one is around to bother them. They came back later for a nighttime snack in the photo below.

The photos don't really catch the best side of some of the deer.



# Christmas Bird Count Provides 'Snapshot' Of Winter Residents

by Vicki Hedrick

December 23, 2010, dawned sunny and mild (approximately 30° and calm). Despite this, bird activity seemed to be very subdued as Shirley Sussenbach and I began Bremer's first Christmas Count. Although not an official Christmas Bird Count, it will provide a snapshot of birds using the sanctuary during the winter months.

The most numerous species observed was the Canada Goose; a flock of 45 geese flew over during the count. The next most numerous species was the Blue Jay with 17 individuals counted during the 2 ½ hour session. Dark-eyed Junco and American Goldfinch tied for 3rd place with 11 individuals each. The non-native House Sparrow (10 birds) came in 4th.

In all 29 separate species were observed. Pockets of activity occurred in the shrubby woodland edge adjacent to ponds 4 and 5 and also along Pipeline Trail. Unfortunately, the lighting was so harsh and the birds along the woodland – pond edge were very adept at staying within the shrubby layer that only a few could be identified with certainty.

The complete list and count was:

Canada Goose (45)  
Mourning Dove (3)

Northern Flicker (2)  
Red-bellied Woodpecker (4)  
Red-headed Woodpecker (2)  
Downy Woodpecker (4)  
American Crow (4)  
Blue Jay (17)  
Black-capped Chickadee (7)  
Tufted Titmouse (8)  
Brown Creeper (2)  
White-breasted Nuthatch (6)  
Carolina Wren (1)  
Golden-crowned Kinglet (3)  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2)  
Eastern Bluebird (4)  
American Robin (3)  
Cedar Waxwing (1)  
**European Starling (8)**

Northern Cardinal (2)  
American Tree Sparrow (4)  
Field Sparrow (3)  
White-throated Sparrow (3)  
Fox Sparrow (1)  
Song Sparrow (3)  
Dark-eyed Junco (11)  
American Goldfinch (11)  
House Finch (5)  
**House Sparrow (10)**

Non-native species are in bold print. House Finches, although native to the U.S. were introduced to the east as caged birds in the early 1900's and were released when it became illegal to sell and keep native birds as pets.

**Save Paper - Save Postage - Save Hickory Hills some money!**  
**Receive your newsletter on-line and in glorious color!**  
**Send your email address to Richard through the "Contact" page [www.bremer-sanctuary.org](http://www.bremer-sanctuary.org) and he'll email each issue to you as a PDF file!**  
**Accordingly, let us know if you wish to be REMOVED from the snail mail list.**  
**And, remember, receiving your newsletter by email will not only allow us to spend more money on work at the sanctuary, it is also the "green" thing to do.**

## Join us at Hickory Hills Chapter!

IAS/Hickory Hills membership: The following categories include IAS and Hickory Hills Chapter dues.

Your membership includes the Hickory Hills newsletter, Cardinal News, Illinois Audubon Magazine, admission to IAS sanctuaries, and the opportunity to attend chapter and state-wide events.

Student (\$22)	Supporting (\$75)
Individual (\$35)	Sustaining (\$100)
Family (\$40)	Eagle Club (\$500)
Friend (\$45)	Corporate (\$500)
Contributing (\$60)	Cardinal Club (\$1000)

Indicate your category and Hickory Hills Chapter and send to Illinois Audubon Society, PO Box 2547, Springfield, IL 62708.

OR

Friend of Bremer Sanctuary: A Friend is not eligible to hold an office or have voting power in the chapter, but is invited to all chapter meetings, events, and has sanctuary privilege and receives the chapter newsletter. **A donation of \$10 is due each January** and should be sent to PO Box 395, Hillsboro, IL 62049 or given to Carl Savage.

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR LOCAL CHAPTER AND THE ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY.**

Please help us speak with a stronger voice on Illinois conservation issues and consider volunteering your time at the Sanctuary. Volunteers are needed for sanctuary maintenance, habitat restoration, and environmental education. Our ability to accomplish our mission of promoting the perpetuation & appreciation of native plants and animals & the habitats that support them, depends on volunteers! Please join us.

### **Hickory Hills Chapter of the IAS is governed by a Board of Directors:**

Jim Hefley - Bluebird Trl.  
Henry Eilers - Restoration  
Vicki Hedrick - IAS Chap. Rep  
Jim Hefley - Building  
Gale Johnson - Building  
Jim Kenney - Restoration  
Geri Kinneman - Education chairman  
Don Krefft - Treasurer & Restoration  
Sonya Luckett - Secretary & Bulletin Board  
Bob Mullins - Restoration  
Jerry Prater - Building  
Dick Rompasky - Building  
Carl Savage - Membership  
Ken Schaal - Restoration chairman  
Richard Slepicka - Website, newsletter

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*This is the February 2011 issue of Hickory Hills Highlights. (A bit late) Watch for the latest news on the Bremer Sanctuary website: [www.bremersanctuary.org](http://www.bremersanctuary.org).*