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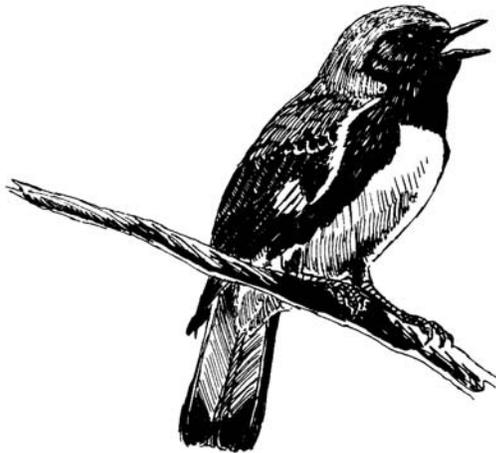
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[www.parklandsfoundation.org](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org)



**Newsletter  
April -  
March 2012**

Honorary Directors  
Dale Birkenholz & Guy Fraker



Black-throated Blue Warbler

**ParkLands Bird Spring Fling**

With April brings lots of northbound migratory birds. The exceptionally mild winter, strong southerly winds and warm March temperatures, will likely put some birds wintering in the United States ahead of schedule. Arrival dates could be two weeks early or more due to the warm weather we've experienced. This migration schedule is based on years past. April brings migrant Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Hermit Thrushes, Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Winter Wrens. Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows will be moving north. They will be replaced by Field Sparrows ambitious to mate, nest, and raise young.

Early April is a good time get out on a calm clear night and witness male American Woodcocks displays. Look for open grassy fields adjacent to damp wooded areas with thick underbrush. The males begin with loud "peent" sounds and then launch themselves high in the sky into a spiraling flight while twittering. After reaching their apex, they slowly descend in a zigzagging motion while chirping, usually landing near a female or their starting location. The woodcock is an amazing and unusual shorebird indeed.

In early April, Yellow-rumped Warblers, our hardest and most common warbler, will start moving through the area. Sometimes you can find a few of these wintering in the area. By mid-April Louisiana Waterthrushes can be found singing on territory with Yellow-throated Warblers and Northern Parulas soon to follow. Around the third week of April, migration should really get going in earnest. The first big wave of Neotropical migrants will start to hit the area. American Redstarts can be found flitting through spring foliage for insects.



**Birth Announcement**

Mid-March activity at the nest in the tall cottonwood in Letcher Basin Preserve indicates the eagles have successfully hatched at least one young this year.



## Meet Your Board Member — *Given Harper*



I grew up in a small town in northeastern Kentucky, and during my childhood I was always fascinated by the natural world. I can still remember when I was five years old I saw a fledgling American Kestrel

that someone had found in a barn. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen and after that I was fixated on birds. Two local physicians and their wives were ardent birders and some of my fondest memories were traipsing in the woods with them and seeing a variety of species of birds and wildflowers for the first time.

I received my B.S. in Biology from Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, and one of my professors encouraged me to pursue a career in ornithology. In 1980 I moved to Illinois and studied bald eagle winter ecology along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers for my M.S in Zoology, which I received from Western Illinois University in 1983.

For the next three years I conducted eagle, songbird and mammal surveys along proposed high-

way and bridge routes in western Illinois. I then worked on a doctorate with Dr. Charles Thompson at Illinois State University where I studied the breeding ecology of house wrens at ParkLands' Merwin Preserve.

In 1990 I completed my doctorate, and I have been a professor in the Biology Department at Illinois Wesleyan University since 1992, where I teach several classes in ecology. Every other May Term I take students to Costa Rica and share with them the exquisite beauty of the tropics.

I have collaborated with Angelo Capparella on research projects documenting pesticide contamination in songbirds. We are currently determining Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel winter abundance in northern and central Illinois. I am also studying eggshell characteristics of Brown-headed Cowbirds that enable their eggs to hatch earlier than host eggs.

In my spare time, my wife Jean and I enjoy landscaping our yard for wildlife, riding bikes and visiting other countries. I am very impressed with the accomplishments of ParkLands, and I am pleased to serve on the ParkLands board.

*Given Harper*

### ***Take A Walk On the Wild Side — Spring for a ParkLands Wildflower Walk***

Who knows what hikers will discover in mid-April and mid-May this unusual year when they amble down Merwin Preserve paths seeking signs of spring?

Will the Jack-in-Pulpits still be standing tall?  
Will the yellow of the Marsh Marigolds still glow in the shade?  
Will Shooting Star blanket the slopes?

*Join Dale Birkenholz at the Merwin Preserve South Gate, 1:00 p.m., Sunday, April 15 and*

*Roger Anderson at the Merwin Preserve West Gate, 1:00 p.m., Sunday, May 13 for a search for spring.*



*Meeker photo*

## Meet Your Board Member — *Nancy Armstrong*

My name is Nancy Armstrong and I am a new board member for Parklands Foundation. I am a native of Chicago but I grew up in North Syracuse, New York. I attended SUNY Oswego on the shores of Lake Ontario, where I met my husband, Joe Armstrong. We moved to Oxford, OH while we attended graduate school and then on to Columbia, MO and finally Normal in 1978 when Joe joined the Biology Faculty at ISU. We were immediately introduced to the Parklands mission (thank you Roger and Dale) and we have been supporters ever since then.

My first career was as an archivist, but after moving to Normal I became the reference librarian at the Illinois Farm Bureau. I switched careers in

1987 to financial planning. I am a financial planner and stock broker with First Allied Securities.

Over the years I have served on the board of many organizations, invariably on the finance committee or as treasurer. I suspect that Don Schmidt had that in mind when he invited me to join Parkland's board. I am looking forward to adding my "2 cents" to the Parklands team.



*Nancy Armstrong*

## Spring Fling *continued*

Late April is a good time to look for Blue-headed Vireo, which is always a treat to see.

The month of May is probably the best month for birding and is, hands down, the best month for warblers in all their glory. Brilliantly colored and singing wildly variable songs, Tennessee, Nashville, and Magnolia Warblers can be found foraging and singing in virtually any suitable habitat.

Warblers can be frustrating at first while constantly flitting and bouncing around. But with patience, you will be rewarded with good looks at some of the most vibrant and awe-inspiring birds in North America.

Around mid-May things start tapering off. Most of the bright singing adult males are in a hurry to establish territories and attract mates. The second half of May brings good birding as well though. This is the best time to see some elusive and uncommon warblers such as Canada, Mourning and if you're really lucky, Connecticut Warbler.

Listen for the "quick, three beers!" song of the Olive-sided Flycatcher, which looks like a big pewee often using a higher more exposed perch. Late May is a good time to look for Yellow-bellied Flycatcher as well. This species looks like a much yellower, more robust Least Flycatcher.

So get ready and get out there, spring is here!

*Matt Winks*

### Eaglet(s)?

ParkLands members may or may not be able to observe the eagles from the parking area at Letcher's Basin Preserve. Take a good pair of binoculars and look south into the tall cottonwood trees along the river, especially the trees with open, bare branches. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends a distance of at least 100 yards be kept between someone observing eagles, their nest and their young.

This pair are resident eagles, visible almost daily through summer, at least in previous years.

Check [www.parklandsfoundation.org](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org) and our Facebook page for the latest news.

*Mary Jo Adams*





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*Ecology Action Center*

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## Plant Sales Another Sign of Spring

Our area is blessed to have so many sources for annuals and perennials, vegetables, shrubs and trees where we can indulge our seasonal urge to grow something, anything.

As you dream of bounteous blossoms, tender sprigs and fleshy fruit while browsing the catalogs and websites, consider shopping for some out-of-the-ordinary plants, many of them Illinois natives, to ornament your yard and improve habitat.

More retail garden centers are stocking natives, and area not-for-profit organizations' one-day sales offer even more unusual selections.

Peruse our calendar and post these events to your own now!

## Calendar of Events

### Wildflower Walk

Sunday, April 15  
1:00 p.m.

Merwin Preserve  
South Gate  
Dale Birkenholz  
(309)-452-8086

### Garlic Mustard Control

Sunday, April 22  
1 p.m.

Merwin Preserve  
South Gate  
Mary Horgan  
(309) 824-5636

### Fell Arboretum Plant Sale

Saturday, May 5  
8-11 a.m.

School Street cul-de-sac (off Beaufort in Normal) next to the ISU Center for Performing Arts

### Wildflower Walk

1:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 13  
Merwin Preserve

West Gate  
Roger Anderson  
(309) 452-5728

### Sugar Grove Nature Center

#### Native Plant Sale

Saturday, May 19  
10 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
Funks Grove

#### Wild Ones Plant Sale

Saturday, May 26  
8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
UI Extension  
402 N. Hershey, B'ton  
ciwildones.pres.@gmail.com

#### Invasives Control

##### Hill Prairie

9:00 a.m.  
Friday, June 8  
Merwin Preserve  
West Gate  
Workdays Leader:  
Jason Shoemaker  
309-531-7065  
[shoemai@hotmail.com](mailto:shoemai@hotmail.com)

**NOTE:** Work dates are subject to change. Join Jason's e-mail list or log on to [www.parklandsfoundation.org](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org).