

ParkLands Foundation

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www.parklandsfoundation.org



Newsletter

December 2011 -
January 2012

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Nancy Armstrong	Roger Anderson
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Julie Elzanati	Matt Fraker
Deborah Halperin	Given Harper
Krista Kirkham	Maria Lemke
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Dale Birkenholz & Guy Fraker

Another Year of Eagles Along the Mackinaw

It's been quite an interesting year observing the eagles that have taken up residency in the Mackinaw River basin, specifically at ParkLands Letcher Basin Preserve and Wyatt's Ford in Woodford County.

I get asked a lot if these eagles migrate away from the area, and I can say that no, they do not. They may move temporarily over to Evergreen Lake or Lake Bloomington for fishing, but I have observed them all year long. So, here is a quick re-cap of notable eagle events of 2011.

January 18: both eagles were observed flying up to the nest with grasses in their talons.

February 16: one eagle is sitting on the nest and appears restless. Could she be sitting on eggs?

March 20: one of the eagles has been on the nest 24/7 since February 16. I'm not sure how often the pair switches nesting duties. A juvenile eagle, perhaps the one hatched in 2010, was seen perched nearby the nest. Vocalization from the adult in the nest appeared to me to say "sorry, you can't come back home now!"

March 30: one fuzzy eaglet observed bobbling up in the nest!

April 6: three eaglets observed at the nest!!!



May 2: all three eaglets are growing fast, although one eaglet is smaller than the other two. The juvenile from last year was observed flying nearby.

May 28: only two eaglets are now being observed. Something must have happened to the smallest one.

June 11: one of the eaglets has fledged the nest! It's been perched up on a branch above the nest for hours.

July 1: both eaglets are out of the nest and have flown to a jumble of tree branches down by the river.

August 15: the last day that the eaglets have been spotted. Perhaps they have flown over to the lake, as it's been very hot and the river is pretty low.

September-October: the adult eagles are now seen less frequently, about 2-3 times per week. I think that I spotted one of the juveniles on Oct. 15.

November and December: the adults have begun "refurbishing" the nest by bringing up more branches to add to its already large size. I'm now seeing them on more of a daily basis, and am looking forwards to observing another year of eagles along the Mackinaw River.

Mary Jo Adams

Meet the New Board Members

Jim Franks and Maria Lemke joined the ParkLands Board in 2011 to fill two vacancies. We asked them to tell us a bit about themselves. If you see them out and about, at ParkLands or elsewhere, welcome them!

Jim Franks



My name is Jim Franks and except for a three year stint in St. Louis, have lived in McLean County all of my life. I have been blessed with the opportunity to graduate from the University of Illinois with a BS in biology, and later in life, gain an MBA from Illinois State University. After graduation, as I tried to determine just what I was going to do, I enrolled in Dale Birkenholz's ornithology class. We took field trips to Parklands, Lake Evergreen, and Ewing Park. This inspired my lifelong interest in ecology and birding.

Soon after Dale's course, I entered retail management in the convenience store and gasoline business. Marriage and raising two sons successfully kept me busy for some time until recently.

Another interest of mine is golf. Sure enough, a regular golfing friend of mine, Dan Deneen, approached me about writing a five year plan for ParkLands. To accomplish this task, I interviewed many board members to gather their perspectives as to the threats, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses of our organization. From this information, a five year comprehensive plan was generated to set goals and objectives for us. Having recently completed that task, I was approached about becoming more involved as a member of the board of directors.

I have been assigned to the finance and outreach committees and am excited about the opportunity to become involved with Parklands. I look forward to serving the organization and to be a part in saving our natural areas as a legacy to future generations.

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Dear Santa....our wish list

1. Member(s) who could help ParkLands set up a database for member information;
2. Member(s) who could assist our Treasurer in his financial/accounting duties; and
3. Member(s) who could assist ParkLands' Outreach Committee on Membership, Public Relations and Education activities. **Reply to Dan Deneen@ilaw202.com** if you want to grant our wish.

Maria Lemke

Dr. A. Maria Lemke has been an aquatic ecologist for The Nature Conservancy of Illinois since 2002. As such, she spends a lot of time in/on the Illinois River and its tributaries. Her knowledge of the Mackinaw watershed makes her a valuable addition to the ParkLands family.



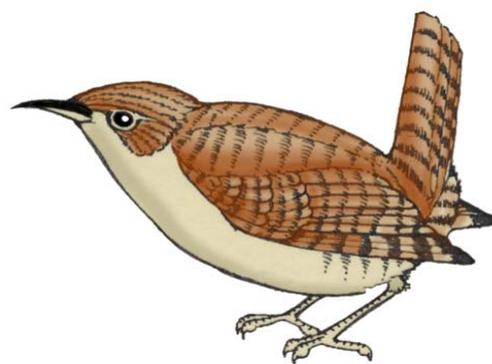
After receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama in 2000, Maria did postdoctoral work at the Illinois Natural History Survey. Between 2000-2006, she was a visiting research scientist and adjunct faculty member at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Not all her time is spent in the water, as evidenced by recent scientific journal articles that describe her work with the agricultural community in the Mackinaw watershed to adopt conservation practices that protect and enhance this pastoral stream.



Moms RULE!

(Wren moms anyway)



Sheri Amsel

My students and I have been studying the biology of house wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) on the Merwin Nature Preserve since 1980, when we first installed those nest boxes on the short steel poles that you have probably noticed as you walked through the preserve's forested areas. Six years ago the editor of our newsletter asked me to write a short piece describing what we had been up to and what we had discovered about the house wren over the course of all those years, and this year Gretchen Monti asked me provide an update, commenting that she remembered learning that female wrens are rather promiscuous.

Her memory serves her well. In that article, I reported that although one male and one female house wren form a social pair and cooperate to raise a family, we had discovered that over one-quarter of all families had nestlings that had been fathered by more than one male. We had discovered this by using DNA fingerprinting to type the putative parents and the young in their nest. As scientific studies often do, this raised a host of related questions that my students, my collaborator Dr. Scott Sakaluk of the ISU School of Biological Sciences and I have been looking into ever since. What we found is rather startling.

The obvious first question we asked is why does this behavior occur? Natural selection would eliminate this behavior unless the benefits outweigh the costs for males and females. The advantage to males engaging in extra-pair mating is obvious; they get to sire more offspring than they would if they stayed faithful to their social mate, assuming they do not lose a comparable amount of paternity to other males while they are out looking for their own extra-pair mating opportunities.

What do females gain? We know that females are 'in control' of this behavior, because the extra-pair matings are not forced, so females must obtain some advantage that maintains this behavioral trait over evolutionary time. A student, Anna Forsman, now a Ph.D. student at Cornell University, conducted

her M.S. thesis testing the idea that female house wrens get genetic benefits for their offspring by engaging in extra-pair mating, thinking that perhaps by finding a male with, say, a better immune system than their mate's, females can enhance the quality of at least some of their offspring. What Anna found, however, is that the offspring sired by the extra-pair male do not have a more robust immune system than those sired by the female's social mate. Instead, nestlings sired by extra-pair males are larger than those sired by the female's social mate, which may give them a competitive advantage over others throughout their lives.

We now know that these extra-pair house wren nestlings are more likely to be males than females, and that the mother can control the sex of the embryo allocated to each of her eggs. Building on these findings, a current Ph.D. student, E. Keith Bowers, is studying how and why females manipulate the sex ratio of their offspring and allocate their sons and daughters to different eggs in their clutches. But that is a story for another day.

Charles F. Thompson
ISU Biological Sciences

ParkLands is seeking applications for a paid, half time Administrative Director.

Letters of interest and resumes can be sent to info@parklandsfoundation.org or mailed to ParkLands Foundation, PO Box 3132, Bloomington, IL 61702-3132

This person will help with maintaining and administering records and be responsible for many of the day to day operations of our organization. In about mid-January we will be posting a detailed job description and help wanted ad at www.parklandsfoundation.org. We hope to begin interviews by March 1 with the goal of hiring this person and having them in place by April 1.

**HELP
WANTED**



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Winter Tracks

In December 2005, Dale Birkenholz and Rhea Edge took a hike in the snow at Merwin Preserve. Their photos show they weren't the only ones out for a hike that day.



Otter tracks from Station 3 on the bluff,



Otters take a leap then a slide down the hill

Deer and turkey tracks..... walking together?



Calendar of Events

Invasive species control

Friday, Jan. 13 &

Friday, Jan. 27

9 a.m.

John English Restoration Area

Merwin Preserve Gas Well

Workdays Leader:

Jason Shoemaker

309-531-7065

shoemaj@hotmail.com

Invasives control

Friday, Feb. 3, 9 a.m.

Hill Prairie

Merwin Preserve

West Gate

NOTE: Work dates are subject to change. Join Jason's e-mail list or log on to www.parklandsfoundation.org.