

KVAS Winter 2009



Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society, a chapter of Illinois Audubon Society

Volume 14, issue 1

Christmas Bird Count Summary

This years Baldwin Lake-Kaskaskia Valley Christmas Bird Count (13th) was remarkable for numerous reasons. The foremost, in my mind, was the low numbers of some of our "favorite" resident, woodland birds, lows that probably cannot be accounted for by the lower group effort. Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice, red-headed woodpeckers, downy and hairy woodpeckers, as well as, N. mockingbird were disturbingly low. Second, despite a smaller team of field observers (8 vs. average of about 13), the count yielded the highest # of bird individuals AND species variety in its brief history. Third, five species not previously recorded on the count were seen for the first time ("new") and nine fresh "high counts" for species were tallied.

The species encountered in the highest numbers were: Common grackle, Snow goose, Ring-billed gull, European starling, American goldfinch, American robin, Lapland longspur, and mourning dove. The most unusual birds were the 2 sedge wrens, and one each of: Virginia rail, Vesper sparrow, Ross's goose, marsh wren, and LeConte's sparrow. In addition to the concerns about resident woodland birds, it is sad to see the continued decline of the loggerhead shrike. We found only two birds this year, and it appears this species is headed for extirpation from our state if we do not get more grasslands built up. Weather cannot really be blamed this year for affecting the count, as it was generally cloudy, mostly calm, and didn't

snow or rain on us. As a compiler I'm sure you all can imagine that I would love to have way more observers than we did this year on future counts, and am hoping we can try some new recruitment techniques for the '09 to again achieve a team of 15 or 20 observers.

A big thank you to our feeder watchers: Tom, Jeff, and Elizabeth and Roy; and to the field observers who endured long walks and cool temperatures for a good part of the day: Marvin, Marty, Bob, Mary, Dennis, Pen, and Carl. Year in and year out, you all are some of the main reasons we keep a quality Christmas Bird Count going in the St. Clair/Randolph Co. area.
-Tim

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Officers:

- *President:* Susan Harbaugh 618-282-2914
- *Vice-president:* Debbie Neumann
- *Treasurer:* Tim Dever
- *Secretary:* OPEN
- *IAS Liaison:* Tom May 475-2790
- *Board Members at Large:* Carol Dougherty, Ralph Buettner, Krista Olson
- *Past President:* Carolyn Wright

Committee Chairs:

- *Programs:* Debbie Neumann 684-4799
- *Field Trips:* Marty Kemper 345-4444
- *Newsletter & website:* Krista Olson 473-3229 kmo6978@yahoo.com
- *Membership:* Tim Dever 475-2366



HELP KVAS RAISE FUNDS

ONLINE:

Help KVAS raise funds.

Please use www.goodsearch.com

SHOPPING: eScrip

Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society (KVAS) continues to reap the benefits of the eScrip program. The Schnucks eScrip Community Card Program simply requires a shopper to register a card and then to present it to the cashier

each time when checking out at the store. Schnucks in turn makes a donation to KVAS. For January thru November 2008, our group received \$342.51 in donations based on over 30 card holders. By comparison, for the same time period in 2007, we had received \$140.84. Quite an impressive increase, wouldn't you agree? If you would like to par-

ticipate in this program or know of a relative or friend you could pass a card to, contact Susan Harbaugh (harbaugh@htc.net or phone 282-2914). Or simply pick up some cards at the service counter next time you are at Schnucks. Card activation is as easy as calling 1-800-931-6258 or by visiting www.escrip.com/schnucks.jsp. Our group ID is 500006097.

Investing in our Future

The 14 third and fourth grades at St. Agatha grade school in New Athens have begun maintaining the sturdy, plastic tube feeder (fitted w/ a squirrel proof mechanism) that the chapter donated to the school in early December. With oversight from their teacher, Laura Lintker, the nine and ten-year olds have thus far

determined that at least one dark-eyed junco is benefitting from the black oil sunflower seeds that were also donated by the chapter. The group also suspects that a gray squirrel may be feeding there. The location of the feeder, hanging on a staff also donated by the chapter, presents a challenge for attracting birds, but

hopefully will work out. The chapter has given the classes a "Birds of Illinois" book with useful color photos and descriptions to help them identify feeder visitors. Students will see how their actions directly affect wild animals that make their homes near our own residences.

Survey Says...

Several chapter members have been keeping records of Northern harriers and Short-eared owls that are using various grassland tracts at the World Shooting Complex north of Sparta. Surveys at eight points near tracts slated for proposed planting of row crops by DNR began in late December. Members hope that their efforts will demonstrate that these two endangered species depend on the habitat in these grasslands (once coal mine

land) for winter survival. With so little good-quality grassland habitat left in southwestern Illinois it would be good to see these tracts left for the benefit of grassland ecosystems. Informal surveys from 2000 and 2001 indicated that upwards of 15 of each species may be using some of these tracts for feeding and day-roosting, with several April records that may also indicate nesting possibility. Both species feed almost exclusively on voles and

mice; populations of these rodents are known to cycle up and down over time, meaning the birds may hunt certain grasslands in one winter only to move on to more productive ones in another. Thus far the surveys have turned up one owl and as many as two harriers at a time. Hopefully the surveys can be continued until April 1st. If you need more information contact Tim Dever.

Renew your DUES

Just a friendly reminder to renew your dues. We must maintain 51% of our member as Illinois Audubon Society Member as well. So, while you're thinking

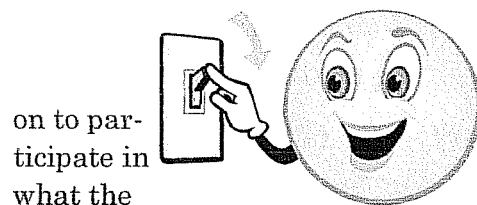
about it, mail your dues to KVAS and IAS. Susan H. has estimated that 40% of our income will come from people renewing their membership.

As members you are encouraged to participate in the activities, attend meetings, and receive this newsletter.

Going Green

On March 28, from 8:30-9:30 p.m., millions of people will unite for one hour in the fight against climate change. Households, organizations and businesses across Illinois, across the nation and across the globe will participate in the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour 2009 by turning off their lights and turning their attention towards the need for substantial, long-term action to raise awareness about energy efficiency

and global climate change. Last year, more than 2.7 million Illinois residents went "wild" by taking a stand, dimming the lights in cities and communities across the state for one hour and reducing energy usage in North-eastern Illinois during that hour by 7%. With your support, Earth Hour 2009 will be even bigger than last year's inaugural global event! Already, more than 240 cities in 62 countries have signed



on to participate in what the World

Wildlife Fund has said will be the "largest climate event in history."

Check out this YouTube link to see the "wild side" of Chicago and major cities across the globe while they dim their lights for Earth Hour 2008: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjWD8pbK5t8>

Brazil Inspires

As most of you know, I recently went to Brazil with the St. Louis Zoo. The majority of our time was spent at two main areas—Iguazu Falls at the border of Argentina and Brazil, and an area called the Pantanal in central Brazil. Iguazu Falls is truly one of the wonders of the world. It is an enormous series of about 300 waterfalls with heights of up to 210 feet spreading over an area of at least three or four miles. The wildest part is called the "Garganta del Diablo". This pounds into a chasm with an ear splitting roar that is impossible to describe. The national park surrounding this natural wonder of the world is 150,000 hectares, and is habitat for an amazing variety of flora and fauna. Brilliant birds and butterflies surround you as you hike the trails. The vegetation is very lush, with beautiful tropical flowers everywhere. Visiting this area was a breathtaking experience.

The Pantanal is quite different. Here they have a wet and a dry season, and in October they were just swinging into their spring and the wet

season. This is a wetland area, and the main occupation here is ranching. We stayed at a huge ranch called "Refugio Ecologico Caiman". The ranch encompasses 53,000 square hectares and runs about 30,000 head of cattle. But—this is the amazing thing, they preserve huge natural areas of habitat for wildlife. In addition to the cattle and horses, there are some 650 species of birds, 75 species of mammals, and large numbers of reptiles all co-existing together in the same area. We saw so much wildlife, that it was like a trip through Eden.

Brazil is a rising economic force in the world, and of course they have many problems. We have all heard of the destruction of the Amazon rain forest, and I witnessed some of this from the air. The destruction of the rain forest is a serious environmental problem that has yet to be dealt with. But in the Pantanal they have set up a system that we would do well to emulate.

While we are working overtime to destroy much of our beautiful western mountain and desert areas, they are figuring out a way to sustain both wildlife and ranching simultaneously. It takes cooperation from the ranchers, but many of them see the advantage of following this plan because they can incorporate tourism with their cattle business. The wildlife subsists on its own as long as they leave habitat, so there is no work involved. The cattle are cared for by cowboys, and the tourists stay in a lodge on the ranch with a staff of naturalists to guide them in their wildlife adventures. The ranch was a model of efficiency.

I fret a lot about the devastation that mankind is visiting on this planet. Yes there is hunger and poverty, and many, many problems to be dealt with. But here's the thing that gets missed in all of this: If we end up destroying this planet, what else is going to matter?

Carolyn Wright



KVAS

KVAS 2009 CALENDAR - PROGRAMS

All meetings will be held at 7pm at Southwestern Illinois College, Redbud Campus in the auditorium. For More Information contact Program Chairman, Debbie Newman at 618-684-4799 or skink@globaleyes.net.

February 19 - Join fellow KVAS members for our annual **Show and Tell Night**. Bring your favorite nature-related item, story, photos to share with your fellow KV members. Also, this year, we're going to also do a 'nature swap meet'. If you have nature-related magazines, books, household or garden items that you no longer want, feel free to bring and share with a fellow member who might make use of the item. Items will be put on a table for anyone to take.

March - No Program

April 16 - Michael Ward, Avian Ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS), will give a program called **Changes in Illinois Bird Populations over the last 100 years**. He was involved with updating the Illinois bird surveys that were first done in the early 1900s, and then again in the 1950s by Dick and Jean Graber. Michael received his PhD from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in 2004 and besides his position with the INHS, he is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. He conducts research on the conservation and behavior of birds not only in the Midwest but has also initiated a project in the Yucatan, Mexico. A project local birders may be interested in is a collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers to establish Least Tern colonies at the Riverlands near Alton. He is originally from Jacksonville, IL.

May 21 - John Schwegman will give a program on **Dragonflies of Southern Illinois**. John is a retired Nature Conservationist from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources where he worked on classification and inventory of natural areas and then acquisition and management of sites for the Nature Preserve/Natural Area System. In his latter years there, he headed up the State's Native Plant Conservation program. John's stunning photography and information on dragonflies will afford attendees a whole new perspective on these winged creatures.

June 13 —9:30am Hanft park, New Athens. Planning and Banding Practice event. KVAS exclusive. Members ONLY are invited to a practice run for KAVANA.

July 25 — KAVANA. KVAS Nature Festival. Hanft Park, New Athens.

September 17 - Richard Day will give a program on **Polar Bears**. Richard has been leading trips for 8 years to Churchill Manitoba and will take us along on this journey through his photos and stories. Richard is a professional nature photographer whose credits include National Geographic, Audubon, Birder's World, and National Wildlife among others.

October 15 - Marilyn Campbell, former Executive Director of the Illinois Audubon Society will talk to us about **Woodpeckers: Nature's Cavity Makers**. Marilyn will talk about North American woodpeckers including all Illinois species, focusing on their overall biology, adaptations, and identification.

November 19 - Debbie Newman, Natural Areas Preservation Specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (and long-time KVAS member), will give us a program on **Southern Flatwoods: Southwestern Illinois' Rare Natural Community**. This natural community once covered several million acres of southern and south-central Illinois. Today, only about 650 acres of high-quality southern flatwoods remain, all right here in our area.

KVAS 2009 CALENDAR - FIELD TRIPS

February 13-16 - Winter Bird Count www.birdcount.org

May 9— Spring Bird Count Contact Tim Dever or Mary Regan 234-1609 (or Tom May) about the Monroe County count. Tim Dever can be a contact for the Randolph Co. count (actually Ann Sanders, 965-9513, is the compiler). Volunteers are needed to assist in Randolph, as Tim is currently covering the entire Northern half of the county by himself. (475-2366)

May 16 — Festival of the Bluffs 9-4pm See directions below to Fults. To volunteer at the KVAS booth, contact Tom May. KVAS will provide information about local birds, birding, and attracting birds. Details on pg. 6.

May 23— Kidd Lake meet at Kidd Lake Marsh NA at 9 a.m. for a combination hike, drive of that area and an adjoining private wetlands complex. At noon, we will break for lunch at Lisa's Restaurant in Prairie du Rocher (those that wear binoculars into the restaurant are strongly encouraged to leave LARGE tips as indicators that birders are a good species to have present). Following lunch those that wish to continue birding will go to a private wetlands complex reconstructed in the ancient Connor Lake bed. Participants should wear appropriate clothing and hiking boots and be prepared to encounter mosquitoes and gnats on this easily walkable terrain. Binoculars and spotting scopes will be useful.

*****Directions: Fults & Kidd Lake Marsh State Natural Area** is located just off Bluff Road about 1 1/2 miles South of the Village of Fults. From Waterloo, turn right onto IL Highway 156 and then an immediate left onto Maeystown Road. Continue on Maeystown Road to Bluff Road. Turn left on Bluff Road and continue past the Village of Fults, passing Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, then turning right by the sign "Friends of Kidd Lake" onto the road for the marsh area. From Red Bud or south, turn onto Il Highway 155 at Ruma and follow this to the intersection of Bluff Road just at Prairie du Rocher. Turn right onto Bluff Road and proceed to the sign at the "Friends of Kidd Lake" turning left onto the road for the marsh area. Participants are advised to car pool as parking is limited.

June 13 —KVAS exclusive. Members ONLY are invited to a practice run for KAVANA.

July 25 — KAVANA. KVAS Nature Festival. Hanft Park, New Athens.

August 22 — On this day we will tour the new IAS headquarters, historic Margaret Adams House, and search for birds in a 40 acre urban woodland - all at the IAS Adams sanctuary in Springfield. We will carpool from SW Illinois and arrive in Springfield at 9:30AM for this approximately 3 hour visit to enjoy IAS's new showcase in the Land of Lincoln. After lunch, some members will want to visit the Lincoln Library and help celebrate the 200th birthday of "honest Abe."

Sept 5 — Start the Labor Day weekend with some Posen Woods Fun and join us at 8:00AM for the Posen Woods walk. Posen Woods is 40 acre state nature preserve adjacent to Washington County Conservation Area located 5 miles south of Nashville, Illinois. Posen Woods has a small walking trail through this unique habitat that once was widespread in the Southern Till Plain of south-central Illinois. Flatwoods are good habitats for red-headed woodpeckers. Time permitting; we will also observe the fascinating and beneficial effects of prescribed fire now used as a management tool in select oak woodlands at Washington County Conservation Area. With luck we will see little ladies' tresses orchids and southern-blazing star in bloom.

December 11— Christmas party. Locations to be determined. Contact Board a member w/ suggestions.

December 19 — Christmas Bird Count for the Baldwin L/Kaskaskia Valley count will occur on Saturday, December 19th, weather permitting of course. The postpone date will be Saturday, December 26th. VOLUNTEER! Contact Tim Dever



Festival of the Bluffs

Saturday May 16th 9 AM - 4PM

Cedar Bluff Park, Village of Fults, Monroe County, Illinois

Nature Festival

Co-Hosted by IDNR & Clifftop

- **Interpretive Hikes at Fults Hill Prairie National Natural Landmark & Kidd Lake Marsh State Natural Area:** *Stunning views, awesome bluffs, dazzling wildflowers ~~~~ stretch your legs!*
- **Natural History Demonstrations & Displays:** *hoot with an owl, stare with a snake, talk with turtles ~~~~ stretch your senses!*
- **Presentations on Conservation & Land Stewardship:** *learn about good plants and evil invaders.....find out how to make a prairie.....how to attract birds & butterflies ~~~~ stretch your mind!*

Stretch your nature:

Native plant sales by Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, Arts, crafts and book sales,
Food, Music, and Entertainment

Free admission. \$2 parking donation requested.

Directions on pg 5.

Raffle

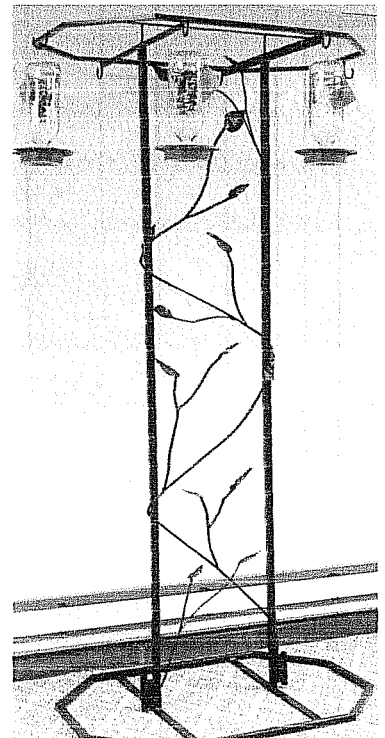
KVAS has a wonderful wrought iron hummingbird feeder stand that will be raffled off as the Grand Prize at our Wildlife Festival on July 25th. It will hold six hanging feeders with pegs to drive in the ground or bolts to attach it to your deck. It was designed and made by Burr Oak Specialty Metals of Freeburg.

Additionally, Kathy and Pat O'Neil, owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Swansea, are donating a first place prize of a beautiful hummingbird door mat and a

second prize of a hummingbird gift basket.

The tickets are being sold at Ten tickets for \$5.00 and will go on sale at our February meeting on the 19th.

Please contact Tom May if you would like more information.



KVAS

www.c-kvas.org

Book Corner

Field Manual of Illinois Mammals

This long awaited field book is now available. The author is Dr. Joyce E. Hofmann, mammalogist and curator of the INHS Mammal Collection. This 358 page soft-cover publication is designed to fit in your back pocket. Each of the 60 Illinois mammal species are illustrated with a color drawing by artist Aleta Holt. Color distribution maps are provided for each species as well.

Other features include two dichotomous keys for each order represented by more than a single species in Illinois. Species accounts include scientific & common names, physical descriptions of animals and their skulls (including measurements and dental formulas), comparisons with similar species, discussions of each animal's natural history, brief descriptions of foot tracks, and notes on status and distribution in Illinois.

Generalized shapes of front and hind tracks are illustrated, as are characteristic track patterns of some species.

Cost for INHS Manual 12 is \$20.00 plus shipping and handling. To order:

Board of Directors

During the December 11, 2008 KVAS Christmas Party held at the World Shooting Complex an "election" was held to determine a Board of Directors for 2009. Volunteers are as follows: President-Susan Harbaugh, Vice President-Debbie Newman, Treasurer-Tim Dever. Secretary-open (any volun-

Send an email to pubs-sales@inhs.uiuc.edu, or

Call (217)244-2161

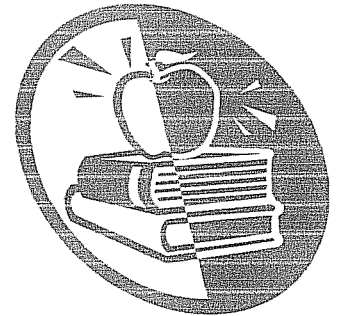
New Nature Children's Book Features Our Area!

If you buy presents for children in your family, a new children's book features plants, animals, and landscapes from right here in southwestern Illinois. *Twilight Hunt* by Narelle Oliver, (Starbright Books, ISBN: 978-1-59572-107-5) portrays a screech owl hunting food for her young. As she searches for and spots various prey, the creatures disappear through camouflage and disguise into the surrounding landscape. The young reader travels with the screech owl through beautiful paintings and Narelle's skillfully-written words to learn about various animals and insects such as eastern fence lizard, praying mantis, luna moth and others. The 33-page hardcover book includes a seek and find guide to assist the reader in locating all the creatures hidden in the book's illustrations.

Narelle Oliver is a highly renowned children's book author and artist in Australia, having won several awards for her work.

teers?), IAS Representative-Tom May, Board Members at Large-Ralph Buettner, Carol Dougherty, and Krista Olson, and Past President-Carolyn Wright. Committee chairs are as follows: Programs-Debbie Newman, Field Trips-Marty Kemper and Barry Newman. Newsletter and Webpage-

Twilight Hunt was spawned through a connection with KVAS



members, Debbie and Barry Newman, when Narelle visited the Newman's home to study the flora, fauna, and landscapes used in the book. Debbie took Narelle to photograph oak forests, prairies, insects, and animals, and discussed aspects of southwestern Illinois ecology. Treehouse Wildlife Center near Brighton, and director Pam Lippert, also played a role in the development of the book. Debbie and Narelle traveled to the Center where Pam assisted Narelle in closeup photography to aid her in developing the varied depictions of the screech owl used in the book. Narelle also spent time with specimens at the Field Museum in Chicago to help her in developing the illustrations.

Twilight Hunt sells for \$16.95 and can be purchased through most major book dealers. The target age range of the book is listed as 5-8 years old.

Testimonial by Annika Olson (3.5yrs): This owl is an awesome hunter. I am the best finder ever. There are a lot of insects for the owls to eat and us to find. Watch out for the BIG surprise.

Krista Olson, and Membership-Tim Dever. Tim Dever has also once again agreed to chair the Kaskaskia Valley Nature Festival, scheduled for July 25, 2009 at Hanft Park near New Athens - mark those calendars now!

Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society

1204 Raymond Dr
Red Bud, IL 62278

Phone: 618-282-2914
E-mail: harbaugh@htc.net

We're on the web

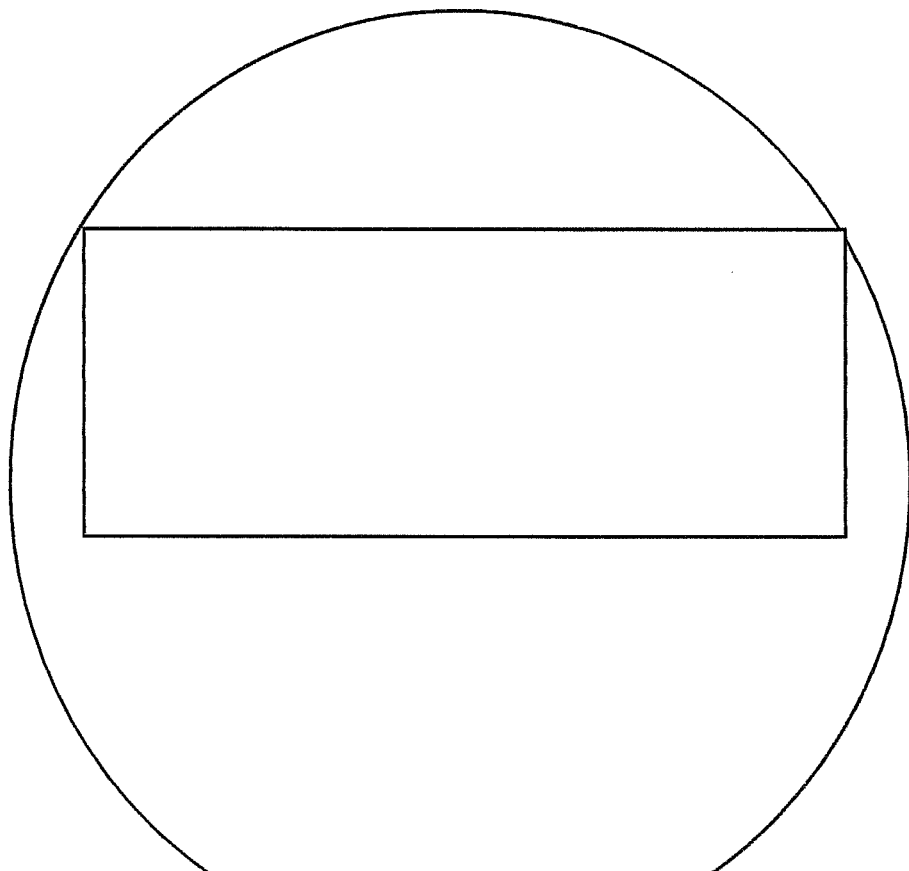
www.e-kvas.org



KVAS

www.e-kvas.org

We Nurture Nature



Mission: To promote appreciation and increase knowledge of wild bird life, plants, animals and other living organisms, and of the environment that supports them, and to further conservation of natural resources.

Meetings: Held at 7pm, 3rd Thursday of each month, SWIC Campus at Red Bud, 500 W. South 4th St. or as announced.

Membership Application

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(information is not for publication)

Membership Class

Student: _____ \$6

Individual: _____ \$8

Family: _____ \$10

We are members of IAS at the _____ level.

Maintenance of chapter status within Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) requires that a minimum of 51% of our membership also be IAS members, with a minimum of 25 IAS members in our chapter. We encourage members to join IAS as well as KVAS. Membership in the IAS, at the family or above level, fulfills 2 memberships towards our IAS requirements.

Please fill out the application to the left and send it, with a check made out to:

Tim Dever

KVAS Treasurer

611 S. East ST.

New Athens, IL 62264.



To become an IAS member check out their website at:

www.illinoisaudubon.org

Or Call:(217)544-BIRD