

# BIRDSONG CHAPTER

Vol. 7 | Issue 4 | Winter 2025-26

**Birdsong Chapter  
2025/26 Schedule**  
Meetings are held at  
2:00 pm at  
Amboy Marsh  
1701 Mormon Rd.  
Amboy, IL 61310  
unless otherwise noted.

**Dec. 18 -Christmas Bird  
Count-contact Diana Rod**

**Jan. 5 - Volunteer Herbicide  
Workshop - receive a  
certificate**

**Feb. 8 - Birdsong Meeting -  
Watch the Birdie! (At the  
feeders)**

**March - Prescribed Burns! -  
Train ahead and volunteer.**

**April 24 - Golf Cart Tour of  
Gremel - Birds, Bugs and  
Flowers**

**May - Spring Bird Count**

**May 23 - Photography  
Workshop**

**June - Bat Acoustic Survey**



Little Brown Bats - photo courtesy of USFWS

## Upcoming for 2026

Bat Acoustic Surveys are planned for June and July 2026 at Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve and Gremel Nature Preserve. At least six ultrasonic recorders will be used to record acoustic data. Collected data will be processed using auto-identification software and manually reviewed. Tara Hohoff, Abby Pagels and Mark Davis of the Prairie Research Institute/Illinois Natural History Survey are the principals of this project. This partnership is an opportunity to identify bat species on our sites, and to gather more data on how we can provide prime bat habitat.

To find out more about Illinois bats and upcoming research:  
<https://www.illinoisbats.org/bats/illinois-thirteen-bat-species/>.

<https://www.prairie.illinois.edu/news/features/kick-starting-conservation/>





Volunteers make all of the work at Amboy Marsh and Gremel happen! We can supply tools and training. You could assist with invasive plant removal, maintenance, and other general stewardship tasks. This winter we will work one Saturday per month, followed by Wednesday workdays for the rest of the month. Schedule as follows:

### WORKDAYS 2026

#### Wednesdays:

March 4, 18, 25

April 1, 8, 15, 29

May 6, 13, 20

June 3, 17, 24

July 1, 8, 15

**Saturdays:** March 14, April 25, May 30, June 13, July 25

No experience is necessary.  
Interested?

Please contact John  
McCrosky@  
[johncmccrosky@gmail.com](mailto:johncmccrosky@gmail.com)

## 2026 Photography Workshop

A special photography workshop is scheduled for Saturday May 23, 2026 with Greg DuBois and Fox Ellis. This will be held at Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve and you must register through Illinois Audubon Society when their registration process opens. Watch for more details. Mr. DuBois enjoyed a bird-filled trip to Cuba recently, and he and Fox have much to share.



Blue Grosbeak

## Herbicide Training

Monday January 5, 2026 is the date for Volunteer Herbicide Training - time and place TBD and announced soon. There will also be a ZOOM option. Volunteers will receive a certificate from the Illinois Department of Agriculture allowing them to apply approved herbicide on Illinois Audubon Society properties. Contact [amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org](mailto:amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org) if interested.



## What Is The Green River Lowlands Preserve? GRLP for short!

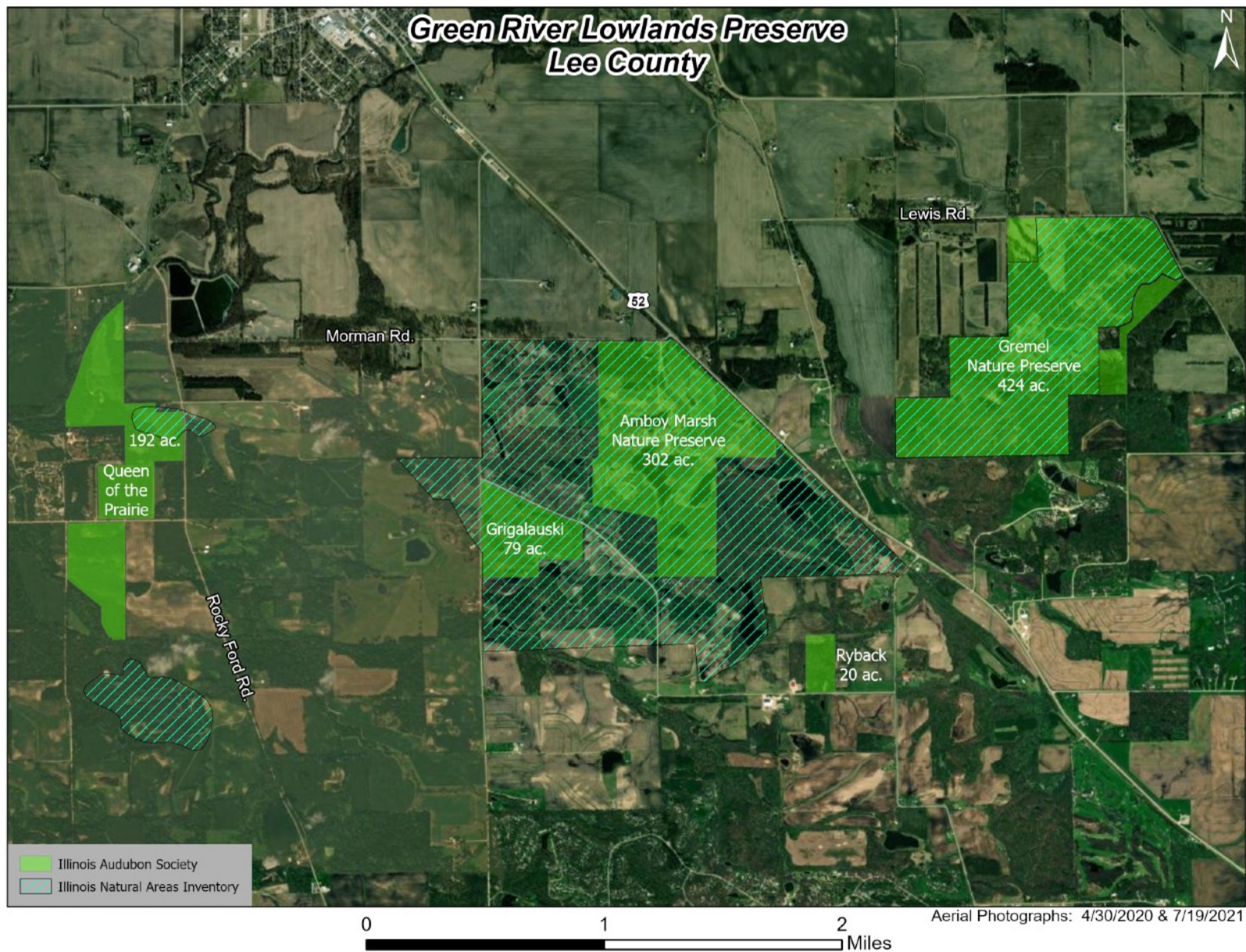
By habit, we refer to the preserves where Birdsong members volunteer as Amboy Marsh, but the actual name of the group of local land parcels owned by Illinois Audubon Society is the **Green River Lowlands Preserve**. So what does that area include? What does the name mean?

Illinois is divided into geographical divisions, and Lee County is located in the **Grand Prairie Division**. Each division has sections and our part of Lee County, along with parts of Bureau County, Henry County and Whiteside County, are located in the **Green River Lowlands Section**. The Green River Lowlands Section is characterized by **eolian sands**, and the **Green River** with its tributaries and **dune topography**. It was formed by glacial outwash, meltwater and wind. Unique flora and fauna endemic to a sand-based habitat, rare in other parts of the state, are found within the Green River Lowlands Section. Below are the sites of the Green River Lowlands Preserve.

Year			
Purchased	Acres	Site Name	Price
2012	272.23	Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve(Guanci/Spears)	\$1,361,150
2014	30.00	Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve (Hatch)	\$250,000
2016	394.89	Gremel Nature Preserve	\$2,132,395
2018	29.35	Gremel Nature Preserve (Gabelmann)	\$315,000
2020	19.80	Ryback	\$115,850
2021	79.16	Grigalauski	\$421,600
2022	132.14	Queen of the Prairie	\$803,453
2024	60.00	Sinadinos	\$480,000
TOTAL	1017.57		\$ 5,879,448

As you can see by the above chart, we are much more than Amboy Marsh and Gremel. As we acquired additional parcels, it was decided to provide an overall name of **Green River Lowlands Preserve**. We use the individual parcel names as we are doing restoration and volunteer work - gotta know where to go! - but for budgeting purposes, GRLP is one entity. We are grateful to the Illinois Audubon Society for investing in the Green River Lowlands Preserve.





# The Big Sit

In late September, a state birding event, The Big Sit, was hosted by the Illinois Audubon Society. The event is very similar to a Global Big Day; a competition in which bird watchers count as many species as possible in a 24-hour period. While Global Big Day involves moving from place to place to maximize the number of species spotted, The Big Sit competition is exactly as it sounds and stays in one place.



Black-throated Green Warbler  
Photo by Adrianh Orozco

A circle 17' in diameter, called a "count circle", is set up and only species observed or heard from that circle count for the final species total. A Birdsong Chapter team took third place out of 41 teams across Illinois in the number of birds observed and first place in hours of observation with a total of 71 species and 15 continuous hours of birding.

Our team "Just Winging It" was made up of four observers, including Dave Brewer, James Hampson, Stephen Hager, and Adrianh Martinez-Orozco.



Big Sitters Jim Hampson, Steve Hagar and Adrian Orozco. Photo by Dave Brewer

We assembled a team of ringers! Jim has birded forever and has participated in over 50 Christmas Bird Counts, Steve is a Biology/Ornithology professor at Augustana, and Adrianh is a photographer, veterinarian and occasional bird tour leader. Our count circle was located at Gremel Nature Preserve near Amboy at the edge of the woods and by the edge of a pond and a small wetland. If the birds are in our favor, next year, we're taking first!



Blue-headed Vireo. - Photo by Adrianh Orozco



## Bird List for third place team “Just Winging It” September 27-28, 2025

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)  
 Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)  
 Blue-winged Teal (*Spatula discors*)  
 Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)  
 Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)  
 Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)  
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)  
 Sora (*Porzana carolina*)  
 American Coot (*Fulica americana*)  
 Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*)  
 Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)  
 Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*)  
 Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)  
 Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)  
 Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)  
 Cooper's Hawk (*Astur cooperii*)  
 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)  
 Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)  
 Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)  
 Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)  
 Barred Owl (*Strix varia*)  
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*)  
 Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)  
 Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*)  
 Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*)  
 Hairy Woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus villosus*)  
 Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)  
 Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)  
 Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*)  
 Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*)  
 Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*)  
 Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*)  
 Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)  
 Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*)  
 American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)  
 Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)  
 Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

## 71 species at Gremel Nature Preserve

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Corthylio calendula*)  
 Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*)  
 White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*)  
 Northern House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)  
 Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*)  
 Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus stellaris*)  
 Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*)  
 Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)  
 Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*)  
 Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*)  
 Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*)  
 American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)  
 Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)  
 House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)  
 Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*)  
 American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)  
 White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)  
 Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)  
 Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*)  
 Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*)  
 Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)  
 Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)  
 Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*)  
 Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)  
 Tennessee Warbler (*Leiothlypis peregrina*)  
 Mourning Warbler (*Geothlypis philadelphia*)  
 Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)  
 Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*)  
 Palm Warbler (*Setophaga palmarum*)  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*)  
 Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*)  
 Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)  
 Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)





It's the most wonderful time of the year -

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT!

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Sign up with Diana Rod at [birdsongilaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:birdsongilaudubon@yahoo.com)

Volunteers make a difference every year, and 2025 was again successful due to many dedicated volunteers, and unflagging support from the Illinois Audubon Society Board of Directors and Staff. Volunteers Deb Doyle and John McCrosky organized weekly stewardship work days, and faithful people showed up to survey birds, clean outhouses, mow and trim, paint, install signs, and create newsletters. Volunteers put in thousands of hours each year. Thank you to all who help in any way!



Blue Jays at the feeder - photo by Deb Doyle

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Birdsong Chapter was hatched in 2012. The chapter was created in response to the purchase by IAS of Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve, 1701 Mormon Road, Amboy. Four years later, IAS purchased Gremel Nature Preserve at 1881 Lewis Road, Amboy. The sanctuaries total about 1,017 acres, and the daily management is the privilege of the volunteer members of the Birdsong Chapter.

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### Birdsong Chapter Officers

President-Deb Carey

Vice President-Diana Rod

Secretaries - Cassandra Rodgers/Jan Williams

Treasurer-John McCrosky

### Websites:

[amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org](mailto:amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org)

<https://amboymarsh.wixsite.com/amboymarsh>

**FaceBook**-Birdsong Chapter-Stewards of Amboy Marsh/Gremel

**Contact us**-[amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org](mailto:amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org)

