

# Grand Prairie *Bird Alliance*



Volume 48 / Issue 2

A Chapter of National Audubon

An Illinois Audubon Affiliate

## Dear Members,

We are excited to usher in a new era of bird advocacy. Starting January 2024, our organization will do business as “Grand Prairie Bird Alliance.”

**Why?** As a Board, we have unanimously voted to take this action in sync with other communities and regions that have decided to not only update their lens for supporting birds and natural habitat but also expand their reach within the general public.

### What does it mean?

- “Grand Prairie” is here. It’s home. It’s ours to protect. It’s where we live, within the limits of Bloomington-Normal and throughout Central Illinois.
- “Birds” are why we exist. No more guessing, and no more academic jargon.
- “Alliance” is how we function. Partnerships, collaboration, and inclusion. No more “Clubs” or “Societies.”

**But what about the legacy of JWP?** Our history has always been a rich part of our organization. The excitement of exploration that John Wesley Powell embodied has been a point of pride and, literally, the name of our Audubon Chapter for decades. Prior to that, we were the Cardinal Bird Club.

**Choosing to “Chart a Path” Over “Perpetuate a Legacy.”** While we respect the past, we are no longer satisfied to look behind instead of ahead. As stewards of the mission, we must take action today that steers the chapter into the future. Currently we believe our name limits our reach because “John Wesley Powell” and “Audubon Society” do not have widespread familiarity among average people.

Recent discussions at board meetings have centered around the following reflective questions:

- Who will we attract to join us in service to nature?
- Who will we motivate to serve as volunteers, committee members, Board members, and as elected officials?
- What will we—as today’s membership—accomplish for those who come after us? What new possibilities will we set in motion?

**What’s next?** Know that we trust our members to remain steadfast in their support of this chapter and what we can accomplish together. The disappointment some may feel in laying down “JWP Audubon” is real; we expect some members will need time to process that. While giving those

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members space to adapt, we will confidently move ahead using the enthusiasm and support of not just this Board but the many members eager to see this change.

**Reintroducing ourselves and our mission:** The name change allows us to reintroduce who and what we are to our Central Illinois community members.

We, Grand Prairie Bird Alliance:

- Love birds, and we believe everyone is a bird watcher;
- Love the land and seek to both restore and conserve natural habitat for people and wildlife;
- Are curious and willing to share our love of learning with a diverse alliance; and
- Enthusiastically encourage everyone to join us in supporting birds!

Sincerely, Grand Prairie Bird Alliance Board of Directors



**The Grand Prairie Bird Alliance Board of Directors: Left to Right: Given Harper, Bode Thompson, Christina Schulz, Angelo Capparella, Bill Davison, Mercy Davison, Patricia Carlson, Wayne Hochstetler**

**Grand Prairie Bird Alliance Helps Persuade Ameren to Route a Proposed Powerline Transmission Line Away from the Kenneth L Schroeder Wildlife Sanctuary**

Grand Prairie Bird Alliance helped persuade Ameren Illinois to route proposed powerline transmission lines of the Central Illinois Grid Transformation Program away from the Kenneth L Schroeder Wildlife Sanctuary at the Bloomington Normal Water Reclamation District Southeast Wastewater Treatment Plant. After learning that the initial proposed route crossed through the sanctuary, Angelo Capparella and Given Harper wrote letters on behalf of Grand Prairie Bird Alliance, and solicited others to email Ameren about this issue.

**We are very pleased that Ameren rerouted the transmission lines away from the sanctuary. According to eBird, 215 bird species have been observed at the Schroeder Sanctuary, which provides important breeding, migration stopover, and wintering habitat for birds and other wildlife.**

## What's in a Name?

In 2022, the National Audubon Society (NAS) began studying a potential name change to address the complex legacy of John James Audubon. After more than a year, NAS opted to retain the name and redouble its efforts in equity, inclusion, and diversity. They also stated that Audubon chapters opting to change their names could remain official chapters of NAS.

Many chapters across the country considered moving away from the Audubon name over the same period of time. Most believed it would be helpful for all to agree on one new name that could be customized for each chapter, acknowledging the power in shared marketing of a name.

JWP Audubon monitored the situation throughout 2023 and began participating in group phone calls with multiple midwestern Audubon chapters starting in late summer. In mid-October, three major Midwestern Audubon Chapters signed on to become the Bird Alliance—the Badgerland Bird Alliance (Wisconsin), the Chicago Bird Alliance, and the Detroit Bird Alliance. Months earlier, the San Francisco chapter had also changed its name to Golden Gate Bird Alliance. All agree the name “Audubon” no longer serves the mission and, in some respects, stands in the way of welcoming more diverse people. We anticipate many more chapter name changes to come.

In keeping with the inclusive and future-focus of national and regional name-change decisions, the JWP Board has decided to bring the issue home to the local level, and it has agreed to a name change for this chapter. Going forward, we are the Grand Prairie Bird Alliance.

The Bird Alliance name helpfully points out what we are trying to protect...birds. It also highlights our rich history of forming alliances through our many partnerships and collaborative initiatives.

So what's next?

- At the national level, we will transition to many new bird names following the American Ornithological Society's recent announcement to change all English bird names currently named after people. “There is power in a name, and some English bird names have associations with the past that continue to be exclusionary and harmful today. We need a much more inclusive and engaging scientific process that focuses attention on the unique features and beauty of the birds themselves,” said AOS President Colleen Handel, Ph.D., a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska. “Everyone who loves and cares about birds should be able to enjoy and study them freely—and birds need our help now more than ever.”
- At the local level, there are the fun things, such as a new logo, as well as the not-so-fun things, such as changing a bunch of paperwork.

Rest assured that we will get everything straightened out and keep the awesome momentum that we have going right now, including:

- Unbelievable attendance at our bird walks,
- A forthcoming bird sanctuary adjacent to the Constitution Trail,
- Birdhouses at the Colene Hoose nature play park, and
- Significant natural area restoration at our public parks.

It's never been a better time to be part of the **Grand Prairie Bird Alliance**. Thank you for being here with us!

GRAND PRAIRIE BIRD ALLIANCE  
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NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
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BLOOMINGTON, IL

### Officers 2023-2024

#### Steering Committee

Mercy Davison, Bill Davison,  
Christina Schulz

#### Secretary

Patricia Carlson

#### Treasurer

Wayne Hochstetler

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Vacant

#### Editor

Patricia Carlson

#### Field Trips

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#### Membership

Christina Schulz, Chair  
Pete Steadman

#### Programs

Given Harper

#### Publicity

Mercy Davison

#### Youth Director

Bode Thompson

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#### Ambassadors

Karen Kohnke  
Francesca Lewis  
Tania Barreto

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**SAVE the DATE**

January 7  
Sunday

**BIRD WALK** Fraker Farm Bird Walk led by Matt Fraker.  
Meet at 9:00 a.m., 2226 County Rd 375 N, Carlock. Enter  
drive and curve left to dead end.

January 20  
Saturday

**BIRD WALK** led by Pirmin Nietslibach, Parkands Merwin  
Preserve, 9 a.m. Meet at North Gate (located on County  
Rd 2650 N, just east of N1925 East Rd/ Gridley Blacktop  
Route 29). You will see a small parking lot on your  
right about a ½ mile down). We are likely to see red-  
headed woodpeckers along with many other winter  
resident birds. Bring a friend!

**Please be patient** as it will take a bit of time to transition all our  
business to our new name. In the meantime, you can still find us at  
[www.jpaudubon.com](http://www.jpaudubon.com) and on Facebook at JWP Audubon.

**Please email us** your email address, if you haven't already, so  
we may include you in our e- communications:  
[jwpaudubon1@gmail.com](mailto:jwpaudubon1@gmail.com).

***We wish you all a very Birdy New Year***

Grand Prairie Bird Alliance board meetings are held from August to May, with the exception of December. There are many volunteer opportunities. Members are always welcome and encouraged to join in a variety of committees, whatever amount of time you can give. To find out how to become more involved in your chapter contact any of the officers listed at the left of this page at [jwpaudubon1@gmail.com](mailto:jwpaudubon1@gmail.com)