

Report on the Important Bird Area project  
January through December, 2006  
Audubon Chicago Region

T-19 P-1

**EXPECTED BENEFITS AND RESULTS:**

Focus attention on the most critical sites for bird conservation  
Use science-based, standardized criteria to identify and select the most important areas.

Involve birders (both amateur and professional) and other volunteers in “citizen science” – gathering crucial data about bird populations and habitat – and motivate them to be constructive advocates for their local areas.

Encompass both public and private lands, and a wide range of conservation and management options for public land managers and private landowners.

Build new productive partnerships within the state, bringing together key ornithologists, wildlife agencies, land trusts, environmental groups, and others around a common cause.

Advance the goals of the North American Bird Conservation Initiatives, including the Partners in Flight program, the Bird Conservation Action Plan for North America, which is subscribed to by hundreds of government agencies, conservation groups and others.

**TIMELINE:**

**The following steps in the IBA process were completed before its inception and are not considered part of this project for federal aid or match reimbursement purposes:**

Form IBA committees; develop criteria; print and distribute data collection materials; introduce IBA Program to conservation organizations, birders, and other volunteers.

Compile preliminary list of potential IBAs; collect data from volunteers via workshops, mailings and phone contacts.

Review data and identify qualifying sites (Technical Committee); continue to compile additional data as needed; enter data into database and report.

Announce second round of nominations.

Announce identified IBA's at press event, hold additional recognition events at 2 IBA sites

Work with INHS to produce a GIS layer of current identified IBA's.

Form conservation team at 1 priority site

**Progress to Date on Evaluation Criteria:**

Evaluation Criteria	Progress to Date
At least 75 sites are nominated and assessed for inclusion on the IBA list.	78 sites have been nominated and 49 have been assessed
An IBA kick-off event is held to name the first IBA's and publicize the program.	Held October '04
State IBAs are included in the state, national, and international IBA databases and incorporated into regional and national Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Action Plans.	State IBAs are included in the Audubon state IBA database
Conservation committees are established for at least 10 sites as ongoing working groups beyond the first phase of the project.	Established at 2 sites, forming at two more
Realistic, useful conservation plans are created for the next phase of the IBA program: implementation of protection strategies and ongoing monitoring for IBAs.	New conservation plan in place at one IBA; planning team at work and one site; assessing extent of conservation plans at other IBAs
Protection strategies, based on the conservation plans, are implemented on at least 10 sites.	New protection strategies being implemented at 1 site; assessing extent of protection strategies at other IBAs
IBA reports that are useful in developing and updating the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan are completed and distributed according to a schedule agreed on by the IBA Coordinator and IDNR's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan Coordinator.	First draft of report completed.

**Job 1 Objectives:**

1. Complete a statewide inventory of Important Bird Areas, build an infrastructure of participants from interested groups and the public who are willing to nominate sites and help advance conservation efforts at IBAs, and hold well-publicized recognition ceremonies at high-profile IBAs.
  
2. Set priorities among IBAs, develop conservation plans at priority sites, and develop an IBA database with GIS linkages.
  
3. Work with state conservation organizations and birding groups to develop necessary information on species, sites, populations, threats and management recommendations, and produce a report describing each site, including priority bird populations and conservation recommendations.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE:**

'06: Held 1 recognition ceremony at Pyramid State Park attended by 80 people including state and local politicians and academics, community members, birders and key constituent groups.

Organized a 40-member volunteer crew to find remaining nesting Swainson's Hawks in Swainson's Hawk IBA.; completed research on possible protection strategies, reaching out to partners for possible conservation team effort

Worked with public and private conservation organizations and birding groups to develop necessary information on species, sites, populations, threats and management recommendations, and produced a draft report describing all 48 identified sites, including priority bird populations and conservation recommendations. Entered detailed site information into Audubon database. (see Appendix 1 for list of sites entered)

Released detailed criteria about migratory stopover sites and invited nominations for IBAs based on criteria (see Appendix 2)

Solicited and received 19 new IBA nominations, primarily from the technical committee list of most likely IBA sites

Compiled extensive list of interested parties associated with each site; including 10 groups that have worked on IBA conservation activities, primarily maximizing opportunities presented by the dedication ceremony. (See Appendix 3)

Worked with editors and authors to generate media stories about IBAs, most notably a long article by Bob Fisher in Volume 14 #4 (spring 06) of *Meadowlark*, our state ornithological journal, plus a follow up series of articles featuring individual IBAs, and coverage of the Pyramid State Park IBA dedication.

Gave presentations on IBA to the Midwest Regional Audubon Conference in Madison, WI and the Lake County Audubon Society.

#### **'07 TIMELINE:**

*Winter '07:* Hold technical and conservation committee meeting to review new nominations and determine rare and unique habitat criteria

Hold conservation committee meeting to identify sites that would benefit from conservation planning groups

Invite the participation of Audubon chapters and other interested groups around the state to plan monitoring, stewardship and public outreach activities at IBA's.

Prepare draft report including all information collected on species, sites, populations, threats and management recommendations for the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan

Develop pilot monitoring plan

Identify 5 additional sites for development of site conservation plans, convene local stakeholder groups to outline conservation plans.

Plan IBA stewards program at 3 sites

Continue to pursue additional nominations for sites that appear eligible.

*Spring '07* Release criteria details for rare and unique habitat and continue to gather data for third round of nominations

Identify second round of Important Bird Areas in well-publicized event

Hold at least one additional dedication ceremony

Complete conservation plans for 3 sites

Implement pilot monitoring plan

*Summer, Fall '07:* Hold 3 additional dedication ceremonies.

Implement IBA stewards program at 5 sites,

Complete conservation plans for 2 sites

Review and refine monitoring plan for full implementation in '08

**Job 2 Objective:** Work with conservation organizations and birding groups to protect or improve habitat at a minimum of seven high-priority IBAs. The priority IBAs will be chosen by the IBA conservation committee after a review of the State Wildlife Conservation Plan and after considering the importance of the habitat, opportunity, and existing partnerships.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Conservation work is underway at four sites and in the beginning stages at one other.

At Bartel Grassland, an active IBA stewardship group regularly meets to plan events, communicate with the landowner, and engage in restoration of the grassland. Gathering and sowing seeds, monitoring and herbiciding invasive weeds, controlling invasive brush, and coordinating with contractors and interns on heavy duty work are the main activities of the group. Audubon recruited the members of this group and actively coaches them. This IBA was featured in a recent Audubon magazine, and was the featured IBA at its national web site.

At the Kane McHenry Swainson's Hawk IBA, Audubon formed a coordinating group for a summer fieldwork project for local birders. The group developed protocols, and recruited and trained volunteers. Over 40 volunteers searched for the hawk's nests. Audubon also engaged a contractor, Eric Secker, to make a website for this project: [www.bcnbirds.org/shp](http://www.bcnbirds.org/shp). Audubon and other volunteers were able to influence Com Ed to relocate a power line project that was scheduled to destroy the longest-know nesting woods of this hawk. Audubon is now reaching out to potential partners to form a conservation team to address habitat needs for this bird.

At the Chicago Lakefront, Audubon worked with the City of Chicago Department of the Environment to produce *Chicago's Bird Agenda 2006*. We wrote an accompanying piece to inform all city landowners about how to create habitat for migrants on their property,

At the Spring Creek Preserves, a proposed IBA, Audubon has organized a community habitat restoration effort, as well as engaged partners in larger scale restoration contracting. This year, funding from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act funded the removal of tree plantations that were fragmenting a 110-acre grassland, resulting in the return of significant numbers and species of grassland birds (see results below; temporary resumption of hay mowing for brush control after 8/1/04 resulted in the decrease of two species.) Additional funding from the Bobolink Foundation funded further removal of tree plantations from another grassland, as well as additional staff support for Audubon's efforts at this IBA.

	June 04	June 05	June 06
Bobolink	2	5	19
Dickcissel	0	0	33
Eastern Meadowlark	3	1	14
Grasshopper Sparrow	0	11	14
Henslow's Sparrow	29	0	12
Savannah Sparrow	0	8	21
Sedge Wren	5	0	0

#### **PLANS:**

The next step for the Swainson's Hawk Project is to share information about the Hawks' current nest sites with partners that may be able to acquire or protect habitat such as land trusts, county forest preserve and conservation districts, and sustainability/regional planning groups, anticipated to take place this fall and winter.

The IBA dedication ceremony at Pyramid State Park provided an opportunity for many of the various constituents of that site to meet each other, and to hear about the conservation importance of the site. Audubon hopes to continue to encourage a productive conservation partnership at this site, which was identified as the highest priority by both the technical committee and the conservation committee.

We are working with the city and local birding groups to reach out to landowners and encourage them to implement the recommendations. In addition, we are teaming up with an effort by the Great Lakes TNC to characterize and identify lakefront migrant habitat; we are now planning a series of workshops for birders to collect data. This process will help to identify migrant IBAs.

We will send a letter to as many interested parties as we have been able to amass information on, including landowners, Audubons and other birding and conservation groups both local and statewide, to gauge the extent of existing conservation planning teams and to invite IBA Stewardship groups to form, in cooperation with landowners.

Working with the IBA Conservation Committee, we will identify 3 other high priority sites for conservation planning and begin discussions with various stakeholders in order to make conservation plans.

More information about the Illinois IBA project is available at the following web sites:

<http://www.habitatproject.org/iba.asp>

<http://iba.audubon.org/iba/viewState.do?state=US-IL>

## Appendix 1

Illinois		
Name	Status	
<u>Alorton Thicket</u>	Nominated	
<u>Anderson Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Recognized	
<u>Baker's Lake Nature Preserve</u>	Nominated	
<u>Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Recognized	
<u>Bartel Grassland</u>	Recognized	
<u>Bergman Slough</u>	Nominated	
<u>Busey Woods</u>	Pending	
<u>Cache River SNA</u>	Recognized	
<u>Calhoun Division of the Two Rivers NWR including Mississippi River SFWA</u>	Identified	
<u>Campbell Pond Wildlife Management Area</u>	Nominated	
<u>Carpenter Park Nature Preserve and surrounding areas</u>	Pending	
<u>Castle Rock State Park and Lowden-Miller SF</u>	Identified	
<u>Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge</u>	Recognized	
<u>Chicago Lakefront</u>	Potential	
<u>Chicago River Corridor</u>	Potential	
<u>Clinton Lake State Recreation Area</u>	Nominated	
<u>Crab Orchard NWR</u>	Identified	
<u>Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge</u>	Recognized	
<u>Des Plaines State Conservation Area</u>	Identified	
<u>Dirksen - McNaughton Woods Land and Water Reserve</u>	Potential	
<u>Donnelley and Lake DePue State Fish and Wildlife Areas</u>	Identified	
<u>Double T Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Identified	
<u>Douglas - Goose Lake &amp; Woodford CCA</u>	Identified	
<u>East Fork Lake</u>	Pending	
<u>Forest Glen County Preserve</u>	Potential	
<u>Goose Lake Prairie State Park</u>	Identified	
<u>Grassy Slough Preserve</u>	Recognized	
<u>Green River State Wildlife Area</u>	Potential	
<u>Greene Valley Forest Preserve</u>	Potential	
<u>Hennepin and Hopper Lake</u>	Recognized	
<u>Herrick Lake / Danada West</u>	Nominated	
<u>Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Identified	
<u>Illinois Beach State Park</u>	Identified	
<u>Iroquois County State Conservation Area</u>	Identified	
<u>Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Identified	
<u>Kane/McHenry County Swainson's Hawk Habitat</u>	Recognized	
<u>Kaskaskia River Corridor</u>	Identified	
<u>Keck's Marsh</u>	Nominated	
<u>LaRue-Pine Hills Ecological Station, Shawnee National Forest</u>	Identified	
<u>Lake Calumet Area</u>	Recognized	
<u>Lake Renwick Heron Rookery</u>	Nominated	
<u>Lake Senachwine Conservation Area</u>	Nominated	
<u>Lake Shelbyville</u>	Nominated	

<u>Lake-McHenry Wetlands Complex</u>	Identified
<u>Little Black Slough Nature Preserve</u>	Potential
<u>Lost Mound Unit, Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi River NWR</u>	Recognized
<u>Mark Twain NWR Long Island Division</u>	Identified
<u>Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Identified
<u>McGinnis Slough</u>	Nominated
<u>Meredosia Lake</u>	Recognized
<u>Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie</u>	Recognized
<u>Mississippi Palisades State Park</u>	Identified
<u>Naval Station Great Lakes</u>	Identified
<u>Newton Lake State Fish &amp; Wildlife Area</u>	Nominated
<u>Oakwood Bottoms, Shawnee National Forest</u>	Identified
<u>Paul Douglas Forest Preserve</u>	Nominated
<u>Pekin Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Recognized
<u>Pembroke Township</u>	Nominated
<u>Pomona Nongame Bird Management Area</u>	Identified
<u>Prairie Ridge State Natural Area - Jasper and Marion Units</u>	Recognized
<u>Pratt's Wayne/Phillip State Park Grassland Complex</u>	Recognized
<u>Pyramid State Park</u>	Identified
<u>Red's Landing SFWA and Batchtown Division of Two Rivers NWR</u>	Identified
<u>Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Recognized
<u>Richardson Wildlife Area</u>	Nominated
<u>Rollins Savanna</u>	Identified
<u>Sand Prairie Scrub Oak Nature Preserve</u>	Recognized
<u>Sanganois State Fish and Wildlife Area</u>	Recognized
<u>Sangchris Lake State Park</u>	Nominated
<u>Siloam Springs Area</u>	Nominated
<u>Spoon River - Emiquon NWR</u>	Recognized
<u>Spring Creek Preserves</u>	Potential
<u>Springbrook Prairie</u>	Potential
<u>Starved Rock Eagle Habitat - Plum Island, Leopold Island, Starved Rock Nature Preserve</u>	Identified
<u>Ten Mile Creek - State Fish &amp; Wildlife Area</u>	Nominated
<u>Tony's Pond</u>	Nominated
<u>Trail of Tears State Forest</u>	Identified
<u>Trelease Woods</u>	Identified
<u>Union County State Conservation Area</u>	Identified
<u>Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge</u>	Identified
<u>Vandalia Lake</u>	Nominated

## Appendix 2

### Migrant Stopover IBA's - Nomination Form Instructions

#### Importance:

Migrant Stopover IBA's are sites that regularly host large concentrations of warblers and other migrant species in the spring and fall. Sites that shelter high concentrations of migrant landbirds and/or sites that are important due to their isolation from other areas with similar habitat will be reviewed.

Although these sites may or may not qualify for breeding birds, they may be very important for warblers, thrushes, flycatchers, vireos, sparrows, and other birds that migrate through Illinois.

Migrant birds can travel considerable distances during the night (and into the day). Their continued survival is highly dependant upon the availability of food at the locations where they stop to rest between flights and upon the availability of necessary cover to avoid predators and elements of nature.

**Isolated sites** are surrounded by areas with little migrant bird habitat. They provide food and shelter for migrating birds that would otherwise not be present. Without these sites, birds must either exert undue energy to continue further or stop at a site with little food, decreased cover, and increased threat from predators.

**Complex or Corridor sites** are large sites that provide sustenance to great numbers of migrants, such as the Chicago Lakefront, a river corridor or very large tract of woodland or forest (20,000 acres or more).

The Chicago Lakefront is a prime example of an important Migrant Stopover Site. The stretch of parks along Lake Michigan act as a haven for the thousands of birds that migrate up and down the Lake Michigan Flyway each year. The Chicago area is also heavily developed, increasing the vital role that these small green spaces play in the survival of birds.

#### Deciding whether to nominate a site:

The IBA forms have a column entitled "Significant If At Least" which is developed from state high count information. If your totals exceed these for 15 or more of the species listed, or you have observed an exceptional number of rare species, the IBA Technical Committee would like to review your data.

#### Nominating a Migratory Stopover site:

The IBA Technical Committee will review historical data of high counts at the site during multiple years, and/or data from a series of visits in one year. Most preferred is a series of at least 3 counts from '06, and high counts from up to 2 additional years in the last five years.

**To submit historical high count data**, use the form with "5 Year Form" in the upper right corner. At least three years of high counts from within the last 5 years are *preferred*. For each species, record the highest number of birds you

observed at the site on any one day during that year. These counts can come from multiple observers, please note that on the form.

**To submit data from a series of visits in one year**, use the form with “1 Year Form” in the upper right corner. At least three visits of at least 2.5 hours in length (starting near sunrise) are preferred. Only submit data from the days with the highest numbers of migrants. Visits should preferably be spaced out in order to show that the site routinely has large numbers of migrants during the course of the season.

**Instructions for both forms**

- Please enter data for all species that you can.
- Data will be accepted from the time period **between April 1 and May 31**.
- Please be sure to describe your site and the surrounding landscape at the end of the form.

Forms are available at <http://www.habitatproject.org/default.asp?cid=38>

If you have any questions, please contact the IBA coordinator (see below):

Send completed forms by fax, mail or email to:

Judy Pollock  
Coordinator, Illinois Important Bird Areas  
Audubon Chicago Region  
5225 Old Orchard Road, Suite 37  
Skokie, IL 60077  
ph. 847 965-1150  
fax 847 965-9282  
[jpollock@audubon.org](mailto:jpollock@audubon.org)

## Appendix 3

### Illinois Important Bird Areas designated as of June 2006

Site	Criteria
Illinois Beach State Park	Raptors
F 04 Kane/McHenry Swainson's Hawk Habitat	Swainson's Hawk
Naval Station Great Lakes	Common Tern
Rollins Savanna	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Lake-McHenry wetlands complex	Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Sandhill Crane, Common Moorhen, Forster's Tern, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Blackbird
Goose Lake Prairie State Park	American Bittern, King Rail, Wilson's Snipe, Sedge Wren, Henslow's Sparrow
F 04 Lake Calumet Area	Black-crowned Night-heron, Common Moorhen, Willow Flycatcher
F 05 Pratt's Wayne /Phillip State Park Grassland Complex	Sandhill Crane, Yellow-headed Blackbird
S 05 Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	Upland Sandpiper, Willow Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink
S 05 Bartel Grassland	Bobolink
Upper Mississippi NWR	Waterfowl, Wading Birds, Shorebirds, Raptors, Sandhill Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper
W Lost Mound Unit, Savanna District of	Waterfowl, Raptors, Wading Birds, Upland Sandpiper, Red-
05 the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge	headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Loggerhead Shrike, Grasshopper Sparrow
Mississippi Palisades State Park	Raptors, Cerulean Warbler
Donnelly and Lake Depue State Fish and Wildlife Areas	Wading Birds
Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area	Waterfowl
S 05 Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge	Shorebirds, Waterfowl, Wading Birds
S 05 Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area	Shorebirds
S 05 Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area	Shorebirds
S 05 Pekin Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area	Wading Birds
S 05 Sanganois State Fish and Wildlife Area	Waterfowl, Wading Birds
S 05 Anderson Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area	Waterfowl
Calhoun Division of the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge incl. Mississippi SFWA	Waterfowl, Wading Birds, Brown Creeper, Prothonotary Warbler
Red's Landing State Fish and Wildlife Area and Batchtown division of Two Rivers NFWR	Waterfowl, Wading Birds, Prothonotary Warbler
Union County State Conservation Area	Waterfowl
S 05 Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge	Waterfowl, Barn Owl, Henslow's Sparrow, Orchard Oriole

Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area	Waterfowl, Brown Creeper
Mark Twain NWR Long Island Division	Wading Birds, Shorebirds, Waterfowl
F 05 Hennepin and Hopper Lake	Waterfowl, Pied-billed Grebe
S 05 Meredosia Lake	Waterfowl
F 05 Grassy Slough Preserve	Short-eared Owl (winter), Barn Owl
Oakwood Bottoms, Shawnee National Forest	Waterfowl, Shorebirds, Yellow-crowned Night-heron
Crab Orchard NWR	Waterfowl, Wading Birds
S 05 Cache River SNA	Wading Birds, Yellow-crowned Night-heron, Brown Creeper, Prairie Warbler
S 06 Pyramid State Park	Waterfowl, Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow's Sparrow, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl (winter)
Double T Fish and Wildlife Area	Upland Sandpiper
Prairie Ridge State Natural Area - Jasper S 05 unit and Marion Unit	Shorebirds, Greater Prairie-chicken, American Bittern, King Rail, Upland Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Sedge Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow's Sparrow, Dickcissel
Castle Rock State Park & Lowden-Miller SF	Cerulean Warbler
Iroquois County State Conservation Area	Red-headed Woodpecker, Sedge Wren
S 05 Sand Prairie Scrub Oak Nature Preserve	Red-headed Woodpecker
Kaskaskia River Corridor	Brown Creeper, Cerulean Warbler
LaRue-Pine Hills Ecological Station, Shawnee National Forest	Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler
Trail of Tears State Forest	Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler
Pomona Nongame Bird Management Area	Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler
Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area	Yellow-breasted Chat, Dickcissel
Douglas - Goose Lake & Woodford CCA	Waterfowl
S 05 Spoon River - Emiquon NWR	Waterfowl
Trelease Woods	Research Site
Des Plaines State Conservation Area	Orchard Oriole

Dedication dates are in first column.  
F=Fall, S=Spring or Summer, W=Winter