

National Audubon Society / Audubon Great Lakes Illinois Important Bird Area Intern

An Audubon volunteer internship: 2-5 days per week; January 29 – June 30. Computer, software and working space provided in Chicago. If intern will be based outside of Chicago, must provide their own computer, Microsoft Office software and working space. No salary compensation. Travel reimbursement available.

Where birds thrive, people prosper

This principle drives Audubon's work to create practical and powerful conservation solutions for birds and for local communities. A regional office of the National Audubon Society, Audubon Great Lakes (AGL) manages conservation work with a reach that includes 50 chapters, nearly 200,000 active Audubon members, and habitat restoration and research across five states.

The AGL Conservation Science Program is viewed as a regional leader in stimulating conservation and stewardship around applied research and monitoring. AGL science projects range from building large communities of citizen scientists, to researching productivity and demographics of threatened species, to facilitating landscape conservation design. Our goals are achieved by staff skilled in local ecological knowledge, working in concert with a network of dedicated volunteers and a team of restoration interns.

Project Summary:

Initiated in the fall of 2000, the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program in Illinois currently recognizes 91 IBAs. A technical committee of eight ornithologists and state conservation leaders steer strategy for Illinois's IBA Program, which is comprised of the most critical habitat for birds across the entire state. Breeding birds at IBAs include Henslow's Sparrows, Greater Prairie-Chickens and Blue-winged Warblers in prairies and shrublands, Red-headed Woodpeckers in savannas, and Worm-eating Warblers in our southern woodlands. Hundreds of thousands of ducks use the Illinois and Mississippi River IBAs as migratory stopover sites. Numerous national wildlife refuges, national forests, state natural areas, state wildlife management areas, state parks, county forest preserves, and non-profit preserves, as well as important private lands, are part of the program. Illinois, the Prairie State, has lost over 99% of its original prairie and 90% of its original wetland acreage. These and other habitat losses have led to sharp declines in many bird populations. Of the eleven fastest declining grassland and shrubland bird species in the United States, seven spend either their winter or summer months in Illinois. Illinois's IBAs focus attention on the most important sites for breeding birds of conservation concern, and on places where shorebirds, raptors, waterfowl and wading birds congregate. Active partnerships are currently engaged in conservation activities, monitoring, and outreach efforts at many IBAs throughout the state. Partnering organizations have utilized the IBA program as a tool to advance bird conservation efforts across the state.

Position Summary: The Illinois IBA Intern will play a critical role in the next phase for Illinois's IBAs. With the most important sites for birds already recognized across the state, Audubon and IBA partners have shifted focus to building and supporting local stewardship at IBAs in order to sustain or improve their benefits to birds. The goal of this internship will be to complete a comprehensive overview of the IBA program in order to find and create strategic opportunities for local conservation action. The IBA Intern will investigate the status of 91 IBAs in Illinois and compile a catalog summarizing current condition and needs for each site. Specifically, the intern will: communicate via telephone and email with a variety of landowners, bird monitors and site stewards affiliated with IBAs, review existing data and IBA criteria, and compile results of research using Microsoft Excel. Furthermore, you may be asked to support other existing projects with data entry and management.

Essential Functions:

- Review original data and criteria used to identify IBAs
- Research current stewardship, monitoring and management activities at IBAs
- Research bird population data at IBAs using eBird
- Contact landowners and key stakeholders who may provide status updates for IBAs
- Organize data tables in Microsoft Excel

Qualifications and Experience:

- General knowledge of scientific concepts and environmental issues
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Demonstrated comfort and skill in telephone interaction
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office applications and obvious ability to learn how to use online database tools
- Some basic knowledge of Illinois birds and their habitat requirements is preferred but not required

To apply: Please email your cover letter and resume to sbeilke@audubon.org by Jan. 8, 2018.