

not relocate any of the birds for my Mermet Lake Christmas Bird Count 31 December.

Then on 10 January 2002, the woodcocks began to perform again, and they did so nearly all month, with just a few exceptions. They continued into February, and one evening six males were displaying in the field. My wife, Myra, and I enjoyed the evening performances, especially one night in February when the birds seemed to be in the air constantly twittering, and peenting everywhere.

The American Woodcock typically begins migrating to its breeding grounds in the northern two-thirds of the United States, including Illinois, and southern Canada in late January through early March. The species is triggered to migrate by the amount of day length, the moon phase, and the passage of weather fronts. They leave just after sunset and migrate alone or in small flocks at low altitudes flying at about 30 to 40 miles per hour (Krementz and Jackson 1999). Birds nesting in the South begin breeding as early as late January; most nesting on the northern breeding grounds begins from March to early May.

In the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, male woodcock carry on their courtship activities in open fields throughout most of the year, although most performances are from late winter through early summer (Krementz and Jackson 1999). In their most northerly breeding locations, woodcocks may begin migrating back south in late September, but most migrate in October (Krementz and Jackson 1999). By Thanksgiving, most woodcocks have left their summer breeding grounds and are either headed toward or arrived at their southern winter homes including the states of Louisiana, Georgia, the Carolinas and Florida. By mid-December, most birds are on their wintering grounds, where they "follow a daily cycle of roosting, feeding and courtship," according to Krementz and Jackson (1999).

The American Woodcock needs to find worms

within an inch or two of the surface nearly every day of its life (Krementz and Jackson 1999). Some of the woodcock's favorite worms in the northern states are introduced European species (Reynolds 1977). Weather affects worm action — if the surface soil is too cold or too hot, the worms will go deeper. Edwards and Bohlen (1996) say "a soil temperature of 50° to 68°F is about right for most of the woodcock's favorite worms." A woodcock also needs proper surface soil moisture in which to feed. "Surface soil moisture of about 20 percent to 50 percent is best for woodcock and worms," say Edwards and Bohlen (1996).

The combination of forest succession, land loss to urbanization, large-scale conversion to monoculture habitats, and unknown factors have contributed to the decline of woodcock. Since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began monitoring woodcock populations in 1968, woodcock in the eastern United States have experienced an average annual decline of 2.6 percent (Bruggink 1998).

#### Literature Cited

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#### In Memoriam

Two fine ornithologists who contributed to *Meadowlark: A Journal of Illinois Birds* and the Illinois Ornithological Society recently passed away: James B. Cope, who died in March 2002 and Victoria Byre, who died in November 2002.

Cope was a biology professor and longtime curator of Earlham College's natural history museum. He and L. Barrie Hunt, who also serves on the Editorial Advisory Board for *Meadowlark*, published their data on mean arrival dates of spring migrants in a past issue as well as mean arrival and departure dates for fall migrants in this issue (page 88). Cope and his wife, Helen, founded the 102-acre Cope Environmental Center in Centerville, Indiana in 1992.

Byre served on the Editorial Advisory Board for *Meadowlark* and wrote an article with Mary Hennen on her research with Eastern Bluebirds in DuPage County for this publication. She was well-known in the Illinois birding and scientific community for spearheading the Chicago Peregrine release project before she moved to Oklahoma to work at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

Byre and Cope provided valuable information to the Illinois birding community. We extend sincere condolences to their family and friends. They will be missed.