

Matt Mckim-Louder, a Graduate Student at the U of I in Urbana, is working for the Illinois Natural History Survey to conduct a Swainson's Warbler census in Southern Illinois. Data from this census will be used to help determine management and conservation needs and strategies for this state-endangered species. Southern Illinois Audubon provided the funds for the \$500 IOS Grant to McKim-Louder's project work during 2009.

Southeastern populations of Swainson's Warblers require dense shaded thickets within bottomland forests for breeding. Although this species generally uses stands of giant cane around swamp or stream edges as nesting locations, some individuals use other dense vegetation. Populations have declined in many of the warbler's historic breeding locations throughout the southeastern United States over

the past three decades. Declines in their northern breeding range (e.g. Southern Illinois) are likely associated with decreases in both canebrakes and dense undergrowth within bottomland forests.

McKim-Louder, along with Jeff Hoover (Illinois Natural History Survey) and volunteers from the Southern Illinois Audubon Society conducted Swainson's Warbler surveys throughout the 2009 breeding season, using playback calls and point counts within canebrakes and dense undergrowth throughout the region, to detect the presence of bird species using this unique habitat. Appropriate habitats within the Shawnee National Forest, Cache River State Natural Area, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and other historical locations are being surveyed. If possible, the breeding status will be determined of any individuals located.

**Matt
Mckim-Louder**



**Kimberly
Meyer Ramirez**

Kimberly Meyer Ramirez, of Governors State University in Frankfort, IL is using the IOS Grant to measure nest predation rates, and identify nest predators, using artificial nests along a restoration gradient at Bartel Grasslands. The purpose is to determine the best management techniques to optimize nesting success. The Chicago Ornithological Society provided the funds for the \$500 IOS Grant to Meyer Ramirez's project work during 2009.

This nest predation study is just one part of the Bobolinking Project, which is designed to engage both young adults from local high schools, and community-based organizations, in stewardship and biological monitoring projects at Bartel Grasslands in Matteson, Illinois and at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Wilmington, Illinois. Bobolinking will accomplish this through a series of workshops, field experiments and restoration workdays, ensuring that everyone in the community learns about the unique habitat at Bartel and Midewin. Meyer Ramirez aims to mentor community members in ecological monitoring projects, equipping them with new skills and opening their eyes to the nature and wildlife that exist in their own backyard. By encouraging community members to become environmental stewards, projects like this help protect Midewin and Bartel and the wildlife that depends on these places – now and for the future.

