

IOS awards six \$1,000 bird research grants

By Robert Fisher



One of the Illinois Ornithological Society's primary objectives is "to promote scientific research and education in order to improve knowledge and awareness of birds in Illinois."

For 2010, IOS – with support from the Chicago Ornithological Society, the DuPage Birding Club and a number of individual donor/members – is proud to have awarded six, \$1000 research grants to the following persons (in alphabetical order):



Sarah Cleeton works at a monitoring site.

Sarah Cleeton

Sarah Cleeton is a graduate student at the University of Illinois, pursuing a master's degree in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. Her IOS grant project will assess the effects of habitat restoration on woodland songbirds in the Chicago area, and determine if woodland patches considered high quality support higher avian diversity.

The spread of invasive plants (such as European buckthorn) is quite extensive throughout Midwestern oak woodlands. Invasive vegetation is known to change ecosystem processes and negatively impact native plant communities, but little is known about how bird species diversity responds to these changes.

- During the 2010 breeding season, point counts were conducted three times each at 47 different woodland sites in the Chicago metropolitan area; those point counts will be repeated in 2011.
- Sites were chosen to represent a gradient of time since restoration took place.
- Vegetation measurements (structure and composition) were taken at each site, to examine the relationship between the bird community and invasive plants.

Preliminary results from the 2010 field season indicate that an increase in the number of invasive shrubs in the understory may decrease both bird abundance and species richness. Results from this study should inform future restoration strategies aimed at improving habitat for woodland songbirds.

*All photos courtesy of grant recipients,
except photo of Jeff Fox.*