

## 2019 Cy-Hawk Big Day Challenge

Chris Edwards

The sixth annual Cy-Hawk Big Day Challenge was held on Sunday, September 22. The Cy-Hawk Big Day is an annual competition between the Iowa City Bird Club, birding for the Hawkeyes, and Big Bluestem Audubon Society of Ames, birding for the Cyclones. Birders from across Iowa are welcome to join either side of the rivalry. The club with the most species at the end of the day wins the coveted Kent-Dinsmore traveling trophy, a duck decoy painted black and gold on one side and cardinal and gold on the other side. And more importantly, the winning club gets bragging rights for the next year! Last year BBAS prevailed for the first time, 108 to 101.

This year's competition was especially noteworthy for the weather. All of eastern Iowa was blanketed with steady rain throughout the morning, and it continued sporadically in the afternoon. But those who ventured out had a surprisingly great day of birding.

This year Big Bluestem fielded three teams in central Iowa and found a total of 102 species. Of special note was the continuing Yellow-billed Loon at Brushy Creek State Recreation Area in Webster County. This is by far the rarest bird in Cy-Hawk history. Other BBAS highlights included Virginia Rail, Common Gallinule, Common Loon, Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Plegadis ibis* sp., Eastern Screech-Owl, Marsh Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Our club fielded six teams this year. Linda Rudolph and Chris Edwards, visiting Lake Macbride, Coralville Reservoir, and Hawkeye Wildlife Area, found the most species with 78. Elliot Stalter and Jamie McCoy ventured northeast to Goose Lake, Green Island Wildlife Area, Bellevue State Park, and Mines of Spain State Recreation Area, and were close behind with 77 species. They found an amazing 20 warbler species. Diana Pesek, James Huntington, and Jerry Denning drove to central Iowa and covered Saylorville Reservoir, Jester Park, and Brushy Creek State Recreation Area. They deserve a shout-out for going above and beyond the call of duty by spending three hours (unsuccessfully) searching for the Yellow-billed Loon that had been present there for weeks. Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, and Mary Noble birded areas in Johnson County including Lake Macbride, Kent Park, and Williams Prairie. Kate Kostenbader and Ted Lepic visited several areas including Swan Lake, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and Amana Lily Lake. Ric and Betty Zarwell birded areas in NE Iowa including Pike's Peak State Park in Clayton County and the Mississippi River floodplain near their home in Allamakee County.

ICBC highlights included Greater White-fronted Goose, Horned Grebe, Common Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, American Avocet, Sanderling, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Tern, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Philadelphia Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Yellow-throated Warbler. Our list included 22 warbler species, which is outstanding for late September. Our final tally was 125 species, a new Cy-Hawk record!

In addition to the competition, there is a fundraising component as each participant is asked to make a minimum \$5 donation to support Iowa Audubon's bird conservation and education programs. This year our club raised \$70 from participants, which was matched by our club treasury for a total of \$140.

I am also proud to report that during the six years of this competition, unlike the Iowa-Iowa State football rivalry, there have been no reports of verbal or physical harassment, taunting, finger-pointing or other rude hand gestures, or objects being thrown by participants or fans on either side. To our birding friends in central Iowa -- thanks for another fun competition!

**BIRDS FOUND ONLY BY IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB (47 SPECIES)**

Greater White-fronted Goose	Green Heron	Tennessee Warbler
Gadwall	Northern Harrier	Orange-crowned Warbler
American Wigeon	Pileated Woodpecker	American Redstart
Ring-necked Duck	Peregrine Falcon	Northern Parula
Horned Grebe	Yellow-throated Vireo	Magnolia Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Philadelphia Vireo	Bay-breasted Warbler
Common Nighthawk	Warbling Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Chimney Swift	Horned Lark	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Sandhill Crane	Tufted Titmouse	Blackpoll Warbler
American Avocet	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Sanderling	Wood Thrush	Pine Warbler
American Woodcock	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Bonaparte's Gull	Northern Waterthrush	Yellow-throated Warbler
Caspian Tern	Golden-winged Warbler	Canada Warbler
Black Tern	Blue-winged Warbler	Scarlet Tanager
Common Tern	Prothonotary Warbler	

**BIRDS FOUND ONLY BY BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY (24 SPECIES)**

Ring-necked Pheasant	Greater Yellowlegs	Marsh Wren
Virginia Rail	Yellow-billed Loon	Brown Thrasher
Least Sandpiper	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Field Sparrow
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Plegadis (ibis) sp.</i>	Vesper Sparrow
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Eastern Screech-Owl	Savannah Sparrow
Wilson's Snipe	Great Horned Owl	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Solitary Sandpiper	Bank Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Lesser Yellowlegs	Cliff Swallow	Wilson's Warbler

**BIRDS FOUND BY BOTH GROUPS (78 SPECIES):**

Canada Goose	Osprey	White-breasted Nuthatch
Trumpeter Swan	Sharp-shinned Hawk	House Wren
Wood Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-winged Teal	Bald Eagle	Eastern Bluebird
Northern Shoveler	Broad-winged Hawk	Swainson's Thrush
Mallard	Red-tailed Hawk	American Robin
Green-winged Teal	Barred Owl	Gray Catbird
Wild Turkey	Belted Kingfisher	European Starling
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-headed Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing
Rock Pigeon	Red-bellied Woodpecker	House Sparrow
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Downy Woodpecker	House Finch
Mourning Dove	Hairy Woodpecker	American Goldfinch
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Northern Flicker	Chipping Sparrow
Sora	American Kestrel	Song Sparrow
Common Gallinule	Eastern Kingbird	Eastern Meadowlark
American Coot	Great Crested Flycatcher	Baltimore Oriole
Killdeer	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Red-winged Blackbird
Franklin's Gull	Willow Flycatcher	Common Grackle
Ring-billed Gull	Least Flycatcher	Ovenbird
Forster's Tern	Eastern Phoebe	Black-and-white Warbler
Common Loon	Red-eyed Vireo	Nashville Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Blue Jay	Common Yellowthroat
American White Pelican	American Crow	Black-throated Green Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Tree Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Great Egret	Barn Swallow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Turkey Vulture	Black-capped Chickadee	Indigo Bunting

**TOTAL SPECIES 149**