
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 1

April 2004

Schedule

Field trips depart from the Dodge Street Hy-Vee in Iowa City unless otherwise noted. Meet in the southwest corner of the parking lot. Please contact the leader in advance if you plan to meet the group at the trip destination. Many of our trips are accessible to people with disabilities; for more information please contact the trip leader. **Meetings** are held at the Grant Wood AEA Southern Facility, 200 Holiday Road in Coralville, generally at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

April 3-4, Saturday–Sunday. Kellerton Bird Conservation Area in Ringgold County to view Greater Prairie Chickens. This is an overnight trip. Contact Chris Caster for details, 339-8343.

April 10, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Cone Marsh. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Meet at the Fin and Feather parking lot, Hwy. 1 and Riverside Dr. Bring a spotting scope (if you have one) and be prepared to walk in wet areas. Leader: Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

April 15, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Jodeane Cancilla of the Macbride Raptor Project will present on the Project's raptor rehabilitation efforts and possibly show off a couple of its captive birds.

April 17, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Meet at the Hills Bank parking lot, Hwy 965 in North Liberty. Visit the Raptor Center and bird blind and walk nearby trails. Leader: Jim Scheib, 337-5206.

April 18, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County for Sandhill Cranes, bitterns, rails and other marsh birds. Meet at the Perkins parking lot on 33rd Ave. SW in Cedar Rapids. Leader: Diana Pesek, 363-3522.

April 22, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Lake Macbride Breeding Bird Survey Meeting. This is an organizational meeting at Tom Kent's Home, 211 Richards St. in Iowa City for conducting a breeding bird survey at Lake Macbride State Park. Call Tom at 337-5231 if you plan to attend.

April 25, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Meet at the Hills Bank parking lot, Hwy. 965 in North Liberty. Bring a spotting scope (if you have one) and be prepared to walk in wet areas. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

May 2, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Kent Park. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Meet at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

Continued on next page →

Schedule – continued

May 4-8, 11-15, 18-19, Weekdays and Saturdays, 6:00-7:30 a.m. Warbler Walks in Hickory Hill Park. Meet at the north shelter parking lot, located off N. Dodge Street at the end of Conklin Lane. Be prepared to walk in wet areas. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

May 8, Saturday. Johnson County Spring Migration Count. Contact Chris Caster at 339-8343 for details. See page 3 for more information.

May 16, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Warblers & Waders. Visit local hotspots for these birds. Be prepared to walk in wet areas. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

May 20, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Ron Andrews, Iowa DNR Trumpeter Swan Restoration Coordinator will present on the restoration effort begun in 1995. Thankfully we again have nesting swans in Iowa after over a century of absence from our wetlands.

May 23, Sunday 7:30 a.m. Wilson's Orchard. Visit this lovely orchard while the apple trees are in bloom for spring birds. Leader: Bernie Knight, 337-9140.

June 5, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Brinton Timber in Washington County. *IMPORTANT BIRD AREA SURVEY.* Target species include Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, and other woodland species. Leader: Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

June 12, Saturday, Dusk. Winged Migration in Hickory Hill Park. A free showing of this superb film will begin at approximately 8:45 p.m. near the Bloomington St. Entrance. Bring blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy the show. Sponsored by Friends of Hickory Hill Park and the Iowa City Bird Club. Rain date June 13. For more information contact Sarah Walz at 466-0908.

June 13, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Indiangrass Hills in Iowa County. *IMPORTANT BIRD AREA SURVEY.* Target species include Bell's Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, and other grassland species. Leaders: Ed and Jean Allgood, 338-8090.

July 17, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. Annual Butterfly Count sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. Contact Chris Edwards at 626-6362 to participate.

July 24, Saturday, 9:30 p.m. Night-lighting for Moths at Squaw Creek Park in Marion. Jim Durbin will set up equipment to attract moths and identify them adjacent to the parking lot area. Bring lawn chairs. For more information call Jim at 337-7194.

August 19, Thursday, 6:00-9:00 p.m. Annual Bird Club Picnic at the Hickory Hill Park north shelter, located off N. Dodge Street at the end of Conklin Lane. Bring something to grill, a dish to share, table service and drinks. For more information call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

August 22, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Local Areas for Shorebirds, wherever water conditions are good. Be prepared for wet walking. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

August 29, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Local Areas for Shorebirds and possible early fall migrant warblers, wherever conditions are good. Be prepared for wet walking. Leader: James Huntington, 338-1837.

Other Dates of Note

May 8, 7-10 a.m. Breakfast with the Birds at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in West Branch. Presentation on migration and basic birding, followed by a bird walk. Coffee and rolls provided. Dan Peterson, 643-2541.

May 14-16. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting at Lansing in northeast Iowa. See www.iowabirds.org for more information.

May 15-16, 10th Annual Wings and Wetlands Festival in Northwest Iowa. Events include bird hikes, prairie wildflower walks, Trumpeter Swan releases, live raptors, canoeing, birding programs for youth, and wild edibles. For more information call the Lost Island Prairie Wetland Nature Center, (712) 837-4866.

September 24-26. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting at Wickiup Hill Natural Area, hosted by the Iowa City Bird Club.

Johnson County Spring Migration Count

On Saturday, May 8th, the Johnson County Spring Count will be held. This count is held nationwide in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. Like the Christmas Bird Count, the purpose of this count is to find as many species of birds as possible and record their numbers. Participants may spend as many hours as they wish birding during the day on Saturday. Some like to get out there before sunrise and bird until after sunset, but if you only have a few hours that would be equally appreciated. Feeder watchers and backyard birders may also help.

There won't be an organizational meeting planned this year, but that doesn't mean we won't plan. If you wish to help with the count please be thinking of an area you feel comfortable covering. We will try to send you there or someplace similar. It is always a good

idea to spend some time scouting your area before the count date to become familiar with the birds. Go more than once; at this time of year the birds can change with the hour. We have target birds for certain places and we will inform you of these. Anyone interested in participating should contact Chris Caster at 339-8343 or cjcaster@earthlink.net before May 1st if possible. You can download a Spring Count checklist from the ICBC website. Watch the weather forecast and dress appropriately; there isn't a rain date. We have encountered everything but snow in recent years. We will get together for lunch from noon to 1:00 at the Hy-Vee in Coralville and re-group for the afternoon. Anyone done for the day can turn in the count form then.

Hope you can participate. The group saw an incredible 175 species last year. This is an exciting time to be out birding!

Lake Macbride Breeding Bird Survey

The Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District is teaming up with the Iowa DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and several other entities to create an Ecosystem Management Plan for Lake Macbride State Park. The development of the management plan is one of the many projects that are currently underway to improve the Lake Macbride Watershed. Some of the goals of the plan include locating special natural resource and invasive species areas; assisting the State Park prioritize restoration efforts; showcasing how public land can advance conservation issues in the watershed; and providing an ecosystem model for parks statewide.

Tim Thompson, our area DNR Wildlife Biologist, has asked the ICBC if they could assist in surveying the breeding birds surrounding Lake Macbride. Some surveys were done by Bernard Hoyer in 1987 and Carol Thompson in 1989. A larger study of the lands surrounding the Coralville Reservoir was

conducted by members of the ICBC from 1991 to 1994. Tom Kent, Gene Walsh, and Chris Edwards co-authored a paper describing this study entitled, "Breeding Birds of the Coralville Reservoir Area", published in the Fall 1994 issue of *Iowa Bird Life*. This study included the land surrounding Lake Macbride. Bruce Ehresman with the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program suggested that it might now be useful to repeat the surveys of the Lake Macbride Area and make comparisons to previous findings.

Tom Kent has offered to lead the ICBC survey and will host a planning meeting on April 22nd at his home. This is an exciting opportunity for the ICBC to contribute to local conservation efforts. Those interested in participating should check the schedule of events for more.

Ringgold County Prairie Chicken Day

April 17 has been designated Ringgold County Prairie Chicken Day. According to DNR Biologist, Mel Moe, outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to welcome the dawn at Kellerton Bird Conservation Area, enjoying these native birds as they boom and dance. Plans include planting prairie forbs at the site later in the morning. Area managers Mel Moe and Ed White will be on hand to share developments of this exciting grassland project. DNR Wildlife Diversity Program and Americorps personnel will be assisting. Kellerton Grasslands is located two miles west of Kellerton, Iowa on Hwy. 2 then about 1 1/2 miles south to the prairie chicken viewing platform. This is a great opportunity to connect with southern Iowa birding and prairie experiences. For further details contact Ben Mullarkey at (641) 783-2369, or Mel Moe at (641) 464-2220.

4th of July Butterfly Count

The sixth annual Iowa City Fourth of July Butterfly County will be held Saturday, July 17. (In case of rain it will be held July 18.) Last year while visiting Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Lake Macbride, we saw 34 species and 428 butterflies, including the threatened Byssus Skipper. Ours is one of almost 400 counts sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). Rules are similar to Christmas Bird Counts: counters record all butterflies observed within a 15-mile diameter circle, on a single day during a period from several weeks before to several weeks after July 4th. Our count is held in the same count circle used for the Christmas Bird Count. It's a great way to spend a summer day! If you would like to participate, please contact Chris Edwards at 626-6362 or credwards@aol.com.

News

As you may know, the Wildlife Habitat store in Coralville closed its doors this winter. However, a new smaller store will be reopening in the same location soon. A Bird's Eye View will be opening Monday, April 5. Bird club members will still be able to purchase bird food at a 10% discount just like at Wildlife Habitat. Stop in soon and check out what they have to offer!



Renewal Reminder



If you haven't already renewed your annual membership, please do so now to ensure uninterrupted service of *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch*. Check your mailing label for the most recent year for which you have paid. If your label still says "03", please send \$10 for 2004. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" to Bernie Knight, 425 Lee Street, Iowa City, IA, 52246.

Birdwatching Course Offered Tuesdays in April at Kent Park

The Iowa City Bird Club and the Johnson County Conservation Department will offer a four-week "Introduction to Birding" course Tuesday evenings during April at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park, near Oxford. The four sessions will start at 7 p.m. each Tuesday and last 60-90 minutes each, with a field trip on the following Saturday or Sunday morning starting at 8 a.m. Each session is \$5.00 for non-bird club members or free to Iowa City Bird Club members. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult. You may attend all four sessions or pick one or more to attend. Registration is requested; call Brad Freidhof at (319) 645-2315 by noon of the Tuesday session. Bring binoculars to all field trips. Feel free to come to class early and bird the loop path by the education center at Kent Park.

Tuesday, April 6, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING: This will include equipment, field guides, bird identification, and where to bird in Johnson County.

Saturday, April 10, 8 a.m. Meet at the Fin and Feather parking lot in Iowa City for a field trip to CONE MARSH, south of Lone Tree. See migrating ducks and more. Bring a spotting scope (if you have one) and be prepared to walk in wet areas.

Tuesday, April 13, 7 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS: This session will cover the common birds found in backyards, and the feeders and food used to attract them.

Saturday, April 17, 8 a.m. Meet at the Hills Bank parking lot North Liberty for a field trip to MACBRIDE NATURE-RECREATION AREA to visit the Raptor Center, observe birds from the bird blind, and walk the nearby trails. See migrant songbirds, common feeder birds, raptors and possibly a Pileated Woodpecker.

Tuesday, April 20, 7 p.m. LESSER KNOWN BIRDS OF IOWA: We will cover birds not generally well known to non-birders with interesting facts on each.

Sunday, April 25, 8 a.m. Meet at the Hills Bank Parking Lot in North Liberty for a field trip to HAWKEYE WILDLIFE AREA to see ducks, pelicans, other waterfowl, and early migrating shorebirds. Bring a spotting scope (if you have one) and be prepared to walk in wet areas.

Tuesday, April 27, 7 p.m. BIRDING ON THE WEB: How to find information on bird identification, birding locations, weather during migration, and much more on the Web.

Sunday, May 3, 8 a.m. Meet at the Conservation Education Center in KENT PARK, near Oxford. Explore the trails in Kent Park looking for warblers, songbirds, woodland birds, and raptors.



2003 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards and Bob Dick

The 53rd annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 14. The total of 61 species was below the count's ten-year average of 65 species and was the lowest total since 2000. The day was overcast with a slight south wind, and the temperature stayed in the mid-20s throughout the day. The Coralville Reservoir and Lake Macbride were frozen, but the Iowa River and smaller streams were mostly open. There was no snow cover. The best birds sighted this year were Common Redpoll and Eurasian Tree Sparrow, the latter a first record for the Iowa City Christmas Bird Count.

Cormorants to Pheasants

Water birds were scarce this year, but a Double-crested Cormorant along the Iowa River in Coralville was a rare find. A cold snap in early December pushed most of the waterfowl out of the area, and only five species were found. A single Snow Goose was unusual, and a pair of American Black Ducks and a flock of Common Mergansers were the only other waterfowl besides Canada Geese and Mallards. Raptors were seen in average numbers, although the three Cooper's Hawks tied the record high count for that species. Ring-necked Pheasant numbers were well above average, in contrast to the previous two years. Northern Bobwhites were absent from the count for the ninth straight year.

Gulls to Woodpeckers

Surprisingly, gull numbers were below average this year. The Mourning Dove population seems to be prospering, as this year's count of 443 more than doubles the previous high count. Prior to 1992, no year's count exceeded 100 birds; this year two field parties surpassed that total. Owls made a rather poor showing, making one wonder about the possible impact of West Nile Virus on local populations. Eastern Screech-Owls were missed for the third time in five years, and only a single Great Horned Owl was recorded. Three Long-eared Owls and one Northern Saw-whet Owl were found however. It was an excellent year for woodpeckers. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were seen at record levels, and Downy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers were seen at ten-year-high levels. Two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and one Pileated Woodpecker were rare finds.

Shrikes to Sparrows

Last year a Loggerhead Shrike was found, but this year two Northern Shrikes were notable. Blue Jays were found in above-average numbers, but American Crows continued their downward trend. Carolina Wrens were seen in good numbers for the second year in a row. Fruit-eating birds were a mixed bag – American Robins typically outnumber Eastern Bluebirds 10-to-1, but this year the bluebirds outnumbered the robins. Cedar Waxwing numbers were far above average, and a Hermit Thrush at Hawkeye Wildlife Area was an excellent find. Only five sparrow species were found this year. American Tree Sparrows were at their highest level in almost ten years, and White-throated Sparrows were also numerous, but no Swamp Sparrows or Fox Sparrows could be located.

Cardinals to Old World Sparrows

Northern Cardinals were seen in record numbers, perhaps due to our expanded feeder watching effort this year. Several flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds were present at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and a few Common Grackles were spotted, but no meadowlarks, Rusty Blackbirds, or Brown-headed Cowbirds were found. Purple Finch numbers were high this year, but Pine Siskin numbers were low. Unquestionably the best bird found on the count was a Common Redpoll visiting a feeder along Camp Cardinal Road in Coralville. Many birders were able to view this rare winter visitor, last recorded on the count in 1993. Two Eurasian Tree Sparrows were found at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, in an area where they had been present for several months. Although long-expected, this was a new species for our count and brings the all-time list to 130 species.

This year there were 38 field observers in 11 parties. Field observers were Ed Allgood, Carl Bendorf, Brady Belcher, Chris Caster, Alysa Cohen, Michael Cohen, Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Tony Franken, Jim Fuller, Therese Guedon, Randy Graesser, Lanny Haldy, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Ken Lowder, Richard Lynch, Cathy Mandarino, Ramona McGurk, John McLure, Erica Michaud, Darlyne Neff, John Neff, Mary Noble, Kari Oeltjen, Diana Pesek, Jim Scheib, Tom Shires, Clayton Simons, Bob Stearns, Joan Stearns, David Weiss, and Bill Windauer.

Bob Dick organized the feeder-watching effort this year. There were 24 feeder watchers at 19 locations, in increase from recent years: Bob and Jean Dunn, Steve Elliott and Jan McDonald, Ann Feddersen, Karole Fuller, Carolyn Gardner, Marilou Gay, Gloria Henry, Margaret Alton Herr, Anne and Chuck Hesse, Melanie Hauptert, Jan Hollis, Dick and Nancy Johns, Sherle Kesik, Kim McDonald, Ann and Jim Ridenour, Sharon Scheib, Janet Segreti, Robert Towner, and Ronnye Wieland.

This year's count was organized by Bob Dick. The results were compiled by Chris Edwards. A pre-count planning meeting was held at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller. On the day of the count we met at noon for lunch at the North Liberty Community Center, at which time we had 58 species. At the end of the day, many participants gathered at the Pizza Ranch in North Liberty for a well-deserved meal and compilation.

Nationally, this year marked the 104th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. More than 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many Pacific Islands participate in this annual bird census. Christmas Bird Count results are published annually in a special issue of *American Birds*. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are also available on the Internet at www.birdsource.org, a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Thanks to everyone who participated for making this year's count such a success!

SPECIES LIST

Double-crested Cormorant	1	Great Horned Owl	1	Eastern Bluebird	17
Snow Goose	1	Barred Owl	6	Hermit Thrush	1
Canada Goose	2971	Long-eared Owl	3	American Robin	15
American Black Duck	2	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	European Starling	2268
Mallard	453	Belted Kingfisher	7	Cedar Waxwing	397
Common Merganser	21	Red-headed Woodpecker	22	American Tree Sparrow	678
Bald Eagle	55	Red-bellied Woodpecker	109	Song Sparrow	22
Northern Harrier	5	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	White-throated Sparrow	73
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Downy Woodpecker	161	White-crowned Sparrow	11
Cooper's Hawk	3	Hairy Woodpecker	21	Dark-eyed Junco	757
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	2	Northern Flicker	68	Northern Cardinal	521
Red-tailed Hawk	70	Pileated Woodpecker	1	Red-winged Blackbird	113
Rough-legged Hawk	3	Northern Shrike	2	Common Grackle	3
American Kestrel	18	Blue Jay	211	Purple Finch	61
Ring-necked Pheasant	98	American Crow	632	House Finch	147
Wild Turkey	69	Horned Lark	144	Common Redpoll	1
Ring-billed Gull	211	Black-capped Chickadee	283	Pine Siskin	4
Herring Gull	6	Tufted Titmouse	60	American Goldfinch	208
Rock Pigeon	161	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	House Sparrow	1276
Mourning Dove	443	White-breasted Nuthatch	105	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	2
		Brown Creeper	7		
		Carolina Wren	10		

Warblers to Watch For During Upcoming Spring Weekends

Mike Dooley

The lists are based on first and last sightings reported in *Iowa Bird Life* for the past six years, with occasional referral to *Birds in Iowa*. When the published dates for a given species fall within a range that could suggest either of two weekends, the weekend more likely to offer a sighting is used, and so the very earliest or latest dates are not taken into consideration. In all cases, then, the earliest state sightings should occur before the first weekend a bird is listed, and the last state sightings should occur after the final weekend a bird is listed.

* = Regularly nesting species, which after arriving will remain into the summer.

[*Warbler*] = An uncommon species which is not usually published in *Iowa Bird Life* in terms of first or last dates. For these species *Birds in Iowa* is the main source for determining which weekends are most possible.

WEEKEND OF APRIL 17-18: *Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped, *Yellow-throated, *Louisiana Waterthrush.

WEEKEND OF APRIL 24-25: Orange-crowned, *Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped, *Yellow-throated, Palm, Black-and-white, *Louisiana Waterthrush.

WEEKEND OF MAY 1-2: *Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, *Northern Parula, *Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, *Yellow-throated, [*Pine*], Palm, *Cerulean, Black-and-white, *Prothonotary, [*Worm-eating*], *Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush (just arriving), *Louisiana Waterthrush, *Kentucky, *Common Yellowthroat, [*Hooded*].

WEEKEND OF MAY 8-9: All 36 Iowa species possible except Connecticut (possible but very unlikely).

WEEKEND OF MAY 15-16: All 36 Iowa species possible.

WEEKEND OF MAY 22-23: *Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Nashville, *Northern Parula, *Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, *Yellow-throated, [*Prairie*], Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, *Cerulean, Black-and-white, *American Redstart, *Prothonotary, [*Worm-eating*], *Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, *Louisiana Waterthrush, *Kentucky, [*Connecticut*], Mourning, *Common Yellowthroat, [*Hooded*], Wilson's, Canada, [*Yellow-breasted Chat*].

WEEKEND OF MAY 29-30: *Blue-winged, Tennessee, *Northern Parula, *Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, *Yellow-throated, [*Prairie*], *Cerulean, Black-and-white, *American Redstart, *Prothonotary, [*Worm-eating*], *Ovenbird, *Louisiana Waterthrush, *Kentucky, Mourning, *Common Yellowthroat, [*Hooded*], [*Yellow-breasted Chat*].

Iowa River Corridor Bird Conservation Area

Chris Caster

The Iowa River Corridor Bird Conservation Area dedication is tentatively scheduled for May 25th, although the exact location of the event hasn't been determined.

Bird Conservation Areas are a relatively new concept for Iowa. Each bird conservation area (BCA) consists of a large landscape "matrix", consisting of a core of public land or permanently protected bird habitat, and surrounded by large areas of private land exhibiting additional suitable habitat. Core public lands are managed intensively for all wild birds, especially those varieties realizing regional or continental population declines. DNR Wildlife Biologists and Private Lands Specialists work with willing landowners to find ways of improving their properties for birds. The program is entirely voluntary, non-regulatory, and could result in extra incentives for landowners to make bird habitat improvements.

Four Iowa sites have been officially recognized to date: Kellerton Grasslands BCA in Ringgold County, Broken Kettle Grasslands BCA north of Sioux City, Spring Run Grassland-Wetland BCA near Spirit Lake, and Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest BCA in northeast Iowa. A fifth BCA, the Union Hills Grassland-Wetland BCA near Mason City, will soon be made official on April 20th. Each landscape hosts a unique mix of bird species, many of which have suffered notable declines in numbers prior to increased conservation efforts.

The Iowa River Corridor BCA will extend from near the town of Tama to the Amanas and will include Otter Creek Marsh. It will not extend into Johnson County because there are future plans to create another BCA encompassing the Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Coralville Reservoir. In fact there are plans to create approximately a dozen BCAs statewide given time. I asked specifically about the Shimek Forest area and was told that the forests of Lee and Van Buren County were of high priority, but might be a couple of years away from designation.

The linear structure of this BCA is unusual and possibly a first nationally. It is generally desirable that BCAs involve large tracts of land, square or round in shape. But according to Bruce Ehresman, DNR Wildlife Diversity Biologist, "The Iowa River Corridor, with its existing large acreage of lands protected under public ownership and private conservation easements, represents the perfect candidate for Iowa's next Bird Conservation Area. This is very significant, given the corridor's resident Sandhill Cranes, Barn Owls, Northern Harriers and other uncommon bird species."

The savanna habitat in this area is suitable for Barn Owls. They have been released in past years and have bred successfully, but if any breeding locations are currently known, the DNR is keeping them secret. It is felt that there was once a successful nest site abandoned due to disturbance by an overzealous birder. Not to negate the impact of human activity, it is likely that predation by Great Horned Owls is a threat to Barn Owl reintroduction that must be overcome. Certainly the establishment of larger tracts of savanna habitat would improve the Barn Owls' chances.

Of course we all need to bird responsibly, with concern for the birds our highest priority. However all the DNR Biologists I have spoken with are encouraging of the information birders can provide. Says Bruce Ehresman, "Certainly just keeping records on what wildlife species exist, what habitats they occur in, dates seen, nesting evidence, etc. can help provide good baseline information that we are lacking."

2004 REAP Assembly

Chris Caster

On February 10th the biennial REAP Assembly was held at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids for the counties in our Region 10: Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington. Its purpose was to allow the public a forum to comment on and recommend changes to REAP policies, programs, and funding. Five delegates were also elected to serve on the 85-member statewide REAP Congress which meets during the summer in even-numbered calendar years. The responsibilities of the congress are to organize, discuss, and make recommendations to the Governor, state legislature, and state agencies.

Two individual were elected from Johnson County as delegates—Harry Graves and Tom Hoff of Iowa City. Both men were quite outspoken with good ideas regarding the program and both exhibited the kind of leadership that should keep the program strong in this time of shrinking budgets. There was certainly a concern amongst the group that changes might be made to weaken the program's funding or reduce public involvement.

Some of the interesting ideas expressed at the forum:

1. A guaranteed portion of the sales from license plates should return to the counties in which they are purchased. Currently all the monies go into a statewide pot so there is no local incentive to push sales.
2. The state should make available license plates that might appeal to more people. Currently only the goldfinch plate is available. Perhaps outdoorsmen would be more willing to spend money for a plate with a pheasant on it.

REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection and benefits not only our natural resources, but cultural as well. REAP provides money for a wide variety of projects through state agency budgets or in the form of grants.

REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of natural resources license plates. Since the program's inception in 1989, the total REAP allocations to Johnson County have been \$3,009,185. For more on REAP Fund Allocation visit www.iowadnr.com/reap/.

It is extremely easy to get a set of REAP license plates. Simply drive down to the Johnson County Administration Building, 913 S. Dubuque St. in Iowa City and remove the plates from your vehicle. If you don't have tools, they can be provided for you. Ask for the DNR plates—you'll get faster service than if you ask for REAP plates. They have them on hand unless you want something printed special. If you have already registered your vehicle for the year the fee is 35 dollars. An additional 10 dollars will be assessed to your yearly registration fee whenever it comes due. For more information call the Johnson County Treasurer at 356-6091.

Midwest Lesser Scaup Research Project

As the annual spring waterfowl migration progresses, Lesser Scaup, often called bluebills, are migrating through Iowa on their way to more northern breeding areas. Lesser Scaup were once extremely abundant on Iowa wetlands during the spring and fall migrations. Sadly, however, they are not as abundant as they once were. Population surveys indicate that scaup populations have declined steadily over the past 20 years. In an attempt to uncover the underlying reasons for this decline, waterfowl researchers from Louisiana State University, USFWS, DU, and several Midwest state conservation agencies, including the Iowa DNR, have joined forces to examine the body condition of female scaup as they migrate across the Midwest this spring. In addition, researchers will be looking at the wetlands that these scaup use during their northward migration to determine if they contain adequate amounts of high quality scaup foods (e.g.,

submergent vegetation, freshwater shrimp and other invertebrates).

A pilot research project conducted in 2001-02 suggested that scaup were actually losing weight when they migrated across the Midwest, arriving in poorer condition in Manitoba, Canada, than they did just 20 years ago. A female scaup that arrives on the nesting grounds in poor condition will have to spend several weeks feeding to acquire enough food reserves to lay eggs, will lay fewer eggs than a healthy hen, will start nesting later than a healthy hen, and, consequently, will hatch her nest later, which will result in her ducklings having lower survival rates. In a nutshell, it appears that there may not be enough food in Midwest wetlands to enable scaup to return to the breeding grounds in good enough condition to nest successfully.

The lack of food is likely related to several factors. Our recent decade of abundant precipitation has caused many wetlands and shallow lakes to be unusually deep for several consecutive years. The deeper water has led to increased fish populations in many wetlands, particularly rough fish and minnows, which can cause wetlands and lakes to become overrun with algae. Excess nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, in runoff can also contribute to poorer water quality. Wetlands with poor water quality have few of the desirable plants and invertebrates needed by migrating scaup and other ducks.

How can you help? This spring, researchers will be painting the backs and underwings of scaup captured on Pool 19 of the Mississippi River near Keokuk to see where and when these birds migrate across the Midwest and which wetlands they use. Some of these marked scaup may be collected when they reach northern Manitoba to see how their body condition compares to when they were on Pool 19.

If you see any colored scaup this spring, please note the date, time, location and number of birds in the flock and call, fax or e-mail the Clear Lake office. A report form is attached for your

convenience. You can obtain a report form at the following website:

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/iadnrcl/>.

Guy Zenner, Waterfowl Research Biologist
Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
1203 N. Shore Drive, Clear Lake, IA 50428
Phone: (641) 357-3517, Fax: (641) 357-5523
E-mail: iadnr@netins.net

Book Review

Rick Hollis

Firefly Encyclopedia of Birds. Christopher Perrins, Editor. Firefly Books, 2003. 656 pages with color illustrations and maps, bibliography, and index. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

Any book this massive is hard to review. I was somewhat put off by the arrangement of this book – it is completely arranged by family. There are sections on every family. Embedded in these sections are many little subtopics including such things as multiple mates, etc., but access to this information without reading the entire book from cover to cover would require luck. The sections contain marvelous pictures, at least two per family, even for the less common families. The glossary is incomplete and the index is less than encyclopedic. If there was a topic you wanted to learn about, it could be in this book but you might never find it. Anyone who grazes through the book is bound to learn things they did not know before. I did, for example, learn that Cinereous Vultures carry water to their nestlings in their bills. Overall the volume does not compare well with John Terres' *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* (1980), in which sections on families, short definitions, and essays on various topics are scattered alphabetically throughout. *The Firefly Encyclopedia* was recently reviewed favorably in *American Birds*.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

June 19th, Hawkeye Wildlife Area Informational Tour. Tim Thompson, DNR Wildlife Biologist, agreed to meet with the group out at Hawkeye Wildlife Area to discuss his management activities here and elsewhere.

Tim and a crew of four manage about 14,000 acres in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. This should be enough, but then who would manage the 1,640-acre Dudgeon Lake Area and 200-acre Red Fox Wildlife Area in Benton County, the 612-acre Chain-O-Lakes and 269-acre Goose Pond in Linn County, the 75-acre Mink Run Wildlife Area in Cedar County, the 18-acre Brighton Boat Access in Washington County, or the 500-acre Redbird Farms Wildlife Area in Johnson County? The crew gets stretched pretty thin sometimes. Unfortunately this is a very typical scenario for DNR Biologists around the state. Each has lands to manage scattered through five or six counties. And according to Tim, “We’ve changed the land so much that everything needs to be managed—we can’t just let it go.”

The Iowa DNR has had a number of successes through the years. The presence of “Giant” Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Wild Turkeys, Peregrine Falcons, and River Otters in our area is due largely to its efforts. Only two species inhabiting the HWA currently receive any special attention—the Canada Goose and the Ornate Box Turtle. Winter wheat fields are planted in the refuge area for the geese and approximately 200 of these birds are banded each year. Burning of the Mallard Pools/Dunes Area is done to remove invasive stands of willows and dogwoods to maintain the turtle habitat. This must be done when the turtles are underground between Oct. 15th and April 15th. These burns are done infrequently since the conditions must be just right to do it safely with such a small crew. Fire is used elsewhere to keep trees out of grasslands, maintain upland

Oak-Hickory stands and rid Silver Maple bottomlands of willows.

Much of what the DNR crew does is to manage the water levels within the HWA. The DNR is required to comply with regulations imposed by the Corps of Engineers for flood control. And the regulations supercede any control of the water levels for habitat improvement. The water level within the HWA must be brought down in December and refill of the HWA marshes isn’t allowed until July, although the Corps will usually begin raising the level in May to ready the Coralville Reservoir for Memorial Day weekend boating activity. The DNR crew must also maintain drainage features to allow farming within the HWA and on adjacent lands. The crew earns about 20% of their yearly operating budget through the lease of 3,000 acres for crops. Wildlife species benefit from the 10% of the corn harvest that the farmers are required to leave in the fields. Sometimes the sorghum is also left for wildlife use, depending on the market flux. Hay cuttings are restricted to the period from July 25th to August 25th.

Interestingly to me, Tim took us to an area that I had never visited in the HWA and it occurred to me that there are many other places within the HWA that none of us ever visit. Tim commented that he believed that there was a heron rookery somewhere in the west of the HWA, but hadn’t yet located it. It makes me wonder what birds might be out there?

Thanks Tim for sharing your time and showing us something new.

Attendees: Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, James Huntington, Richard and Nancy Lynch, John McLure, Cathy Mandarino, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Tim Thompson.

– Chris Caster

November 20th, Meeting. Marlene Ehresman from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation presented on the publication she authored for the Foundation entitled, “A Bird’s Eye View: A

Guide to Managing and Protecting Your Land for Neotropical Migratory Birds in the Upper Mississippi Blufflands.” Marlene is the Foundation’s Program and Planning Associate and is an Iowa State University graduate in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology.

Of the 145 birds that regularly nest in Iowa, 41 are neotropical migrants that prefer forest or forest edge habitat. Studies have shown many of our forest-dwelling species to be suffering severe population declines. Our state is thought to have originally contained about 7 million acres of forestland, woodlands, and oak savannas—it is now estimated that only 2 million acres remain.

Not only has habitat loss been a problem for our birds, but habitat fragmentation and reductions in habitat quality have been problems as well. Although we often find Cerulean Warblers and Wood Thrushes in much smaller forest tracts, researchers believe that a minimum of 250 acres of forested land is necessary to maintain a population of most forest-interior bird species. Birds are often attracted to smaller woodlands, that because of predation by skunks and raccoons or cowbird parasitism, may not sustain their populations. Long narrow tracts or irregularly shaped forests have an abundance of edge habitat, and do not protect birds nearly as well as square or round land parcels. The building of roads, clearing of forests for utility lines, creation of agricultural fields, urban sprawl, etc. breaks up the land into ever smaller fragments, creating ever more forest edge.

Fortunately, because 92% of Iowa’s forests are privately owned, there is much we can do. Educating landowners regarding the impact their land-use decisions have on the birds is the first step. This is the primary reason for the INHF publication. We need to get people to think of land not as property, but as a piece of a neighborhood or community and include the birds as part of that community.

Below are some basics of bird conservation:

1. The larger the habitat, the better.
2. Preserve unbroken interior forests whenever possible.
3. Encourage native species of trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers.
4. Control or eliminate non-native invasive species.
5. Reduce the use of pesticides.
6. Keep grazing animals out of the forest.
7. Maintain some dead or dying trees for cavity nesters.
8. Reduce sources of soil erosion.
9. Avoid creating a lot of disturbance during nesting season.
10. Protect your land beyond your lifetime.

The Upper Mississippi River bluffland region of Iowa contains much of our state’s remaining forests. In an effort to protect this habitat in not only Iowa, but in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois as well, the Blufflands Alliance was formed in 1995. The INHF is a partner in the Alliance and works with many other local and national organizations to secure our natural heritage.

The INHF is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting Iowa’s land, water and wildlife. It assists landowners in finding ways to permanently protect their woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. And for those landowners who have implemented permanent protection, it helps develop land management plans. Founded in 1979, the INHF has completed land protection projects in 93 Iowa counties totaling more than 75,000 acres. The INHF also provides education through workshops, publications, and a college internship program. The INHF is celebrating their 25th Anniversary this year by co-sponsoring 25 wildlife related events throughout the state. One of them will be the grand opening of the F.W. Kent Park Conservation Education Center on June 12-13th. The INHF was instrumental in the addition of the 43-acre Tomash farmstead to the park’s southwestern border and in the funding of new exhibits at the Conservation Education Center. For more

check out their website at www.inhf.org. Thanks Marlene for all the work you do.

Attendees: Jean and Ed Allgood, Barbara Beaumont, Jodeane, Pat, and Enid Cancilla, Chris Caster, Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, James Huntington, Dave Kyllingstad, Richard Lynch, Bob McIlwain, Jim Miller, Andrea and David Novak, Dan Peterson, Sandy Pickup, Viana Rockel, Linda and Robert Scarth, Jim Scheib, Tim Thompson.

– Chris Caster



January 25, Owl Prowl. The day was overcast with some wind when we started out. We headed to Hickory Hill Park to check for Barred Owls. As we walked across the grass and prepared to play a tape a Barred Owl flew in to check us out! He didn't stay long but most of the group were able to see him. Next we headed to Willow Creek Park to check the cottonwood tree where a pair of Great Horned Owls has nested during the last two years. No owls were present, but the size and age of the tree made it a memorable visit. Hopefully the owls are raising a family there again this spring. Next we went to the north side of Hawkeye Wildlife Area to view the Northern Saw-whet Owl. It was still roosting in the same location where it had been present all winter.

Participants: Chris Caster, Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow (leader), Therese Guedon, Melanie Haupt, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Kenna McNewell, Jim Nelson, Diana Pesek, Tammy Thweatt.

Birds (8 species): Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Barred Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl,

Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Cardinal.

– Karen Disbrow

February 7, Amana Turkey Walk. The winter snow overnight continued for the first few hours but we headed off carefully staying off the interstate. Arriving at 151 and Hwy. 6 we drove the "Amana Trail" loop to look for turkeys in the fields while the weather cleared. An owl on a wire was presumed to be a Barred Owl. We saw a dark phase Rough-legged Hawk about a half mile west of High Amana. The slippery road conditions resulted in a very low speed "fender bender" between two of the participating cars but no injuries thankfully. After checking out the road to the Amana Nature Trail we decided it was impassable for some of our vehicles so we went to brunch early at the Brickhaus Restaurant where Diana Pesek caught up to us.

After breakfast (Tammy Thweatt's first at Amana) we drove to the Conservation Education Center at Kent Park and walked the short loop trail there, finding the usual winter assortment of birds with many coming to the two feeders behind the building. Given the stiff wind in our faces, six inches of snow on the trail, and the 14-degree temperatures, the short loop was about the right length for a leisurely after-breakfast walk.

We maintained the tradition of seeing no turkeys on the Turkey Walk but when we got home there were two in our yard!! What can I say? Ramona gave me some shelled corn which I put out in the yard for the turkeys and before I could shovel off the deck there were six deer at it.

Participants: Chris Caster, Dara and Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow, Jonnie Ellsworth, Therese Guedon, Bernie Knight, Ramona McGurk, John and Gail McLure, Diana Pesek, Jim and Sharon Scheib (leaders), Tammy Thweatt.

Species (19): Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant,

Rock Pigeon, Barred Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.
– *Jim Scheib*

February 21, Burlington Area. The day started out overcast with a temperature of 36F, but the 20-30 mph winds made it feel more like 6F. By afternoon the wind had died down, the sun came out, and it was a beautiful day. The ducks on the Mississippi River were a great sight though it was very windy and most of us birded from the cars. Diana Pesek braved the wind and got some great views with her scope. One car had a window mounted scope which proved very useful. We went to the usual parks and cemeteries but saw little there so ventured on. There was no snow cover, so the Lapland Longspurs were not found. The day ended with a Mute Swan on the Mississippi River; although a probable escaped bird, it was a great sight. Many Thanks to Chuck Fuller for the great day, and to Linda Fisher and Linda Donelson for bringing radios.

Participants: Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Roger and Linda Fisher, Chuck Fuller (leader), Ken Lowder, Cathy Mandarino, John McLure, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible.

Birds (46 species): Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, American Robin, European Starling, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed

Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

March 6, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Ten birders explored Hawkeye Wildlife Area looking for late winter/early spring migrants. The day started off partly cloudy and brisk, but by noon the sun was shining with much-appreciated warmth and coats were shed. Very nice weather conditions for an early March outing. We began our trip at Swan Lake, where there was a nice assortment of waterfowl. Some of the highlights were the numerous Redheads and two Buffleheads.

On the way into HWA, Bob Dick and his carpool companions spotted a Rough-legged Hawk that the other three cars of people missed. So after we looked at the Swan Lake waterfowl, Bob led us back to the area where the hawk had been seen and the nicely cooperative raptor was spotted again, this time sitting atop a telephone pole. It eventually flew and we all watched it until it re-landed quite a ways away. The group stopped at the end of James Avenue to admire some Eastern Bluebirds as well.

On the corner of F-28 and Greencastle, we heard Western Meadowlarks so we pulled over and got some good looks at these birds for a while before moving on to explore Greencastle's water and Round Pond. Greencastle had no waterfowl present today but Round Pond produced Common Mergansers, Northern Pintails and more Bufflehead.

After exploring the south side of HWA we headed to Amana Road and the north side. We had to scope the abundant waterfowl that were present by looking south into the sun, so viewing conditions were not optimal, but we did all see the Snow Geese that were present. Also, two lovely Northern Harriers were hunting nearby and a Song Sparrow lived up to its name by singing from a bush near the parking lot.

By the time we finished looking at the waterfowl along Amana Road, the sun was shining more brightly, the day was warming and no one wanted to quit yet. So we drove to Hanging Rock Woods and walked for quite a ways to see what we might find. Turned out we found hardly any birds along the trail, but when we finally found something, it was worth the wait. We saw two Red-headed Woodpeckers, one of which was going in and out of a newly excavated nest at the top of a broken tree. Another wonderful sign of the promise of spring!

After returning from our walk in the woods, the time was around 12:30 so the group reluctantly realized we had better head back home to take care of other weekend obligations, hard as it was to leave when the day was so beautiful!

Participants: Bob and Dara Dick, Linda Donelson, Susan Jacques, Cathy Mandarino, Ramona McGurk, Pat Meyer, Diana Pesek (leader), Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib.

Birds (42 species): Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, House Sparrow.

– *Diana Pesek*

March 28, Cone Marsh. The Iowa City Bird Club and Friends had a field trip to Cone Marsh from 8:00 - 11:30 a.m. We did not see the Eurasian Wigeon or Greater Scaup which had

been found on the previous day. Another notable miss was Northern Pintail. The weather deteriorated throughout the morning. We lost ten degrees over the time of the field trip, and what started as gray and “maybe we’ll miss the rain after all” (according to one person who is a far better newsletter editor than weather prognosticator), turned downright soaking as the morning progressed. We did have a wonderful time despite the weather conditions. We were entertained by a Northern Mockingbird, saw several groups of Sandhill Cranes in flight, and enjoyed nice looks at the waterfowl, including several Ross’s Geese mixed in with the Snows. Herps encountered included Blanding’s Turtle, Eastern (or Red-sided) Garter Snake, Chorus Frogs, Spring Peepers, and Leopard Frogs.

Participants: Barbara Beaumont, Brady Belcher, Bob Dick, Drew Dillman, Judith Dillman, John Donelson, Linda Donelson, Mary Doud, Chris Edwards, Thérèse Guédon, Rick Hollis (leader), Dick Lynch, Nancy Lynch, Cathy Mandarino, Jeff Nichols, Wolf Oesterreich, Diana Pesek, and Jerry White.

Birds (52 species): Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross’s Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Rick Hollis*

Our Most Interesting Birder Edgar and Bess Folk

From May 20 to May 30, 1999, Bess and I circumnavigated the British Isles on an Audubon Tour on the vessel *The Explorer*. We went as far west as the Outer Hebrides, to Staffa and St. Kilda. There the culture of the inhabitants was to live on sea birds, capturing them by roping down the cliffs. The birds' feathers were sold on the mainland. On these islands there were artifacts of the Vikings and flocks of the original Viking breed of sheep. On the trip as a whole, we especially liked hearing nightingales singing and taking pictures of puffins and gannets at our feet.

Our most interesting birding companion was Phoebe Snetsinger. One reason she came on the tour was to add one particular bird to her life list (which at that particular time was about 8,000 species). This bird was the Corn Crake. We were standing beside her, on one of the Orkney Islands, in the garden of a beautiful monastery, when she heard and saw her first Corn Crake.

In 1981, Phoebe was diagnosed with malignant melanoma. Believing the end was near, she began to travel with passion to add to her life list of birds. She nearly died at the hands of five men in New Guinea in 1986, but she kept traveling. She finally died in late 1999 in a bus crash in Madagascar, traveling in search of Appert's Greenbul. She was killed with her binoculars in hand. She had the world record for bird sightings, more than 8,400 species. Read more in her book, *Birding on Borrowed Time*, published by The American Birding Association, \$19.95.



♪ Bird Notes ♪

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOR

Band recoveries are so low that it is difficult to use them to measure the effects of the environment at one end of a bird's migration on their behavior or success at the other end of their migration. Science is now using other techniques.

Scientists have found that Hooded Warblers wintering in mangrove swamps or dry, scrubby lands differ in the amount of carbon isotopes found in their blood. This happens thusly: insects eat the plants which store different proportions of carbon isotopes in their leaves, depending on whether the plants are moisture-loving or dry tolerant. These differences in diet can still be detected in Hooded Warblers once the warblers reach their breeding grounds in Canada. Hoodies that winter in mangrove swamps (cushy places with lots of insects) tended to score better in reproductive measures than their cousins that wintered in dry areas. They bred sooner and produced two more eggs on average than those who breed in more xeric areas.

The feathers of American Redstarts vary in hydrogen isotopes. Scientists studying redstarts in the winter can determine in which part of North America the redstarts spent the summer. This offers another link between behavior and environment.

Scarlet Tanagers were outfitted with ultralight radio transmitters, and researchers could see that male tanagers flew regularly from one forest patch to another, even small isolated patches. This suggests that the lack of Scarlet Tanager breeding success in small patches is not due to the unattractiveness of the patches to males.

– Rick Hollis

HELP FOR HOUSE SPARROWS

It is hard to imagine people worrying about House Sparrows, but in Britain they are doing just that. The British Minister for Nature

Conservation is leading a campaign to help House Sparrows, whose numbers have suffered a mysterious decline. The decline is blamed on a combination of the exploding British cat population and “trendy gardens” that lack weedy corners. A government leaflet advises people on ways to help House Sparrows, including such tips as leaving out food, avoiding mowing lawns intensively during the summer, and leaving small, weedy patches. Ben Bradshaw, the Minister for Nature Conservation said, “If we all play our part, the population of this treasured bird can be increased.” His thoughts were echoed by Mark Avery, conservation director of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who said: “The House Sparrow is the one bird in Britain where everyone can take action to help save it.”

– Rick Hollis

TWITCHERS WATCH ROBIN SERVED RARE

Birders from all over Britain who gathered in Grimsby to see a rare American Robin were horrified to see it eaten by a passing sparrowhawk. They were setting up their cameras when the predator swooped down from a row of factories and warehouses. The young bird “didn’t really live to enjoy her moment of fame,” a twitcher told the guardian. “It was a terrible moment,” said Graham Appleton, of the British Trust for Ornithology, which had spread news of the bird’s arrival. But the trust’s migration watch organizer Dawn Balmer was more philosophical, noting, “Most of these rare visitors eventually succumb anyway to cold weather or a lack of food, if not predation.” The robin was probably blown across the Atlantic after being “caught up in a jet stream”, Appleton added.

– BBC News, from Rick Hollis

AVIAN POPULATION DECLINE

A series of population surveys in Great Britain over the last 40 years show many surveyed species to be in sharp decline. An analysis of the findings appear this week in the journal *Science*. Some 201 bird species were tracked between 1968 and 1971, and then again from

1988 to 1991. An analysis showed that avian populations had declined by about 54 percent.

Scott Miller, a biologist with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, said the British study was impressive and powerful because it was so thorough. “The United Kingdom has a monitoring system that is unmatched,” Miller said. “They may not be representative of the world as a whole, but they have the best data.” Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University, said in *Science* that the British study results “show that we have likely underestimated the magnitude of the pending extinctions.”

For the complete article visit:

www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/science/03/18/wildlife.gone.ap/index.html

– Chris Caster

GOOD NEWS FOR RED KNOTS

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board recently agreed to adopt new conservation measures for the horseshoe crab – an “ancient living fossil” whose population has been declining due to over-fishing. The measure restricts the harvest of horseshoe crabs, prohibits harvest and landings during May 1 - June 7, and encourages bait saving techniques. These new restrictions will go into effect in New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Additionally, New York is adopting similar measures, but not under the ASMFC umbrella. These actions will go a very long way to not only protect the horseshoe crab, but the migratory shorebirds that depend on them, particularly the Red Knot – an Audubon WatchList species that has seen a significant decline in recent years. The Red Knot is an ornithological marvel that travels more than 18,000 miles each year, often as many as 2,500 miles non-stop from its wintering home in Brazil to its summer home in the Arctic. The Delaware Bay is their last stop en route to the Arctic. It’s where they have to double their weight in order to survive the migration – and for Red Knots, more than 95% of their food is

horseshoe crab eggs. This significant victory is the culmination of years of work to protect the horseshoe crab by the National Audubon Society, Audubon state offices in New York and Maryland, New Jersey Audubon, Delaware Audubon and the Virginia Audubon Council, and other partner organizations in bird conservation.

– *Audubon Email Newsletter, from Diana Pesek*

WHOOPING CRANES, 1901

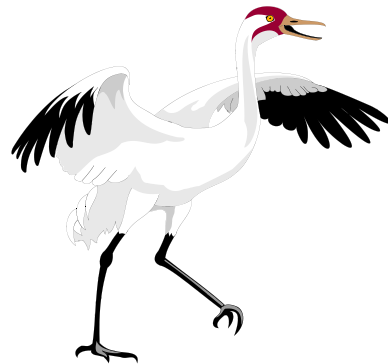
Here’s an excerpt from a letter written to F. W. True, Head Curator of Biology at the U. S. National Museum (the Smithsonian), from Charles K. Worthen, a commercial taxidermist, in the course of preparations for the Smithsonian’s exhibits at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, N.Y., 1901. It was not uncommon for the Smithsonian to use commercial taxidermists to fill gaps in their own collections for the sake of a world’s fair exhibit. The masthead of the letter reads, “Chas. K. Worthen, Naturalist and Taxidermist, and Dealer in Bird and Mammal Skins, and fine

Geodes,” based in Warsaw, Illinois. The awkward grammar is left as is.

25 January 1901:

“My dear Mr. True; Your telegram reached me yesterday A.M. and I got the Whooping crane packed and shipped to you on the noon Express same day and I suppose, has reached you by this time. I enclose your bill, and make you special price as usual, these skins list and retail for \$18.00 and I find it much more difficult to get them every year.”

– *Mike Dooley*



**IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM**

Please send this form with your annual membership dues to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, Bernie Knight, 425 Lee Street, Iowa City IA 52246. Annual dues are \$10 per household. Members receive a membership card which entitles them to a 10% discount on bird seed at Bird’s Eye View in Coralville.

Name(s) _____

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Email _____

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Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published three times per year (usually April, September, and December). Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to editor Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail at credwards@aol.com.

Annual membership dues are \$10.00, payable by January 1st for the coming year. Make checks payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, and mail to Bernie Knight, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through.

For general bird club information, contact Iowa City Bird Club president Chris Caster at 339-8343. **To lead or suggest a field trip**, contact field trip coordinator Karen Disbrow at 339-1017. **The club web site** is maintained by Jim Scheib and is located at icbirds.org.

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

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