
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 3

December 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.

December 8, Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Christmas Bird Count Planning Meeting at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll north of Iowa City. Call Jim at 338-3561 if you need directions.

December 19, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. This year's co-compilers are Bob Dick and Chris Edwards. If you would like to participate or be a feeder watcher but cannot attend the planning meeting, contact Bob at 337-4945 (home), 321-0706 (cell), or bobd555@earthlink.net. On count day we will meet at noon for lunch at the North Liberty Recreation Center, and at 5:30 p.m. for a dinner and compilation at The Mill Restaurant in Iowa City.

January 20, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Come enjoy a showing of "The Making of Winged Migration".

January 29, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Burlington area for Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Winter Wren, Lapland Longspurs, waterfowl, and more with local guide Chuck Fuller. We will meet Chuck at the Port of Burlington at 8 a.m. and will return to Iowa City by 5 p.m. so bring a sack lunch or snack. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

January 30, Sunday, 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. Bird Feeder Watch Social. Come for coffee and rolls and see what host Rick Hollis has at his feeders this winter morning near North Liberty. For directions call Rick at 665-3141.

February 8, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. Special Meeting. Club officers and anyone else interested will be meeting to discuss club finances and goals. The site for this meeting has yet to be determined. Those interested should contact Chris Caster at 339-8343.

February 17, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Join us for an evening in Panama. Ken Lowder will present photos and talk about his January trip to the Chiriqui Highlands and to the famous Canopy Tower.

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Schedule – continued

February 27, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Mississippi River and Quad Cities for gulls, eagles, and diving ducks. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

March 6, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Cone Marsh for ducks, geese, and other early spring migrants. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

March 24, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Ric Zarwell the Iowa Audubon IBA Coordinator will present on the progress of the nearly three-year-old Iowa Important Bird Areas Program.

March 27, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area and other local birding spots. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

April 21, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Dr. Jim Dinsmore, retired ISU ornithologist, will present on New Zealand—A Birder’s View.

Other Dates of Note

December 18, Saturday. Cedar Rapids CBC. Contact Dale Fye (364-1638), Pete Wickham (363-6884) or Jim Durbin (377-7194) to participate.

December 29, Wednesday. North Linn CBC. Contact Diana Pesek (363-3522) or Jim Durbin (377-7194) to participate.

March 8, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. Prairie Preview XXII at Montgomery Hall on the 4H Fairgrounds south of Iowa City. Daryl Smith of the University of Northern Iowa will introduce and present his movie entitled “America’s Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie”. The program includes information and displays from your local environmental organizations and agencies. Refreshments provided.

<h3>Give a Holiday Gift to the Birds</h3>

As tax time approaches, please consider a gift to Iowa’s birds and other wildlife by contributing to the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund. More commonly called the Chickadee Checkoff, this remains Iowa’s major source of income for the more than 400 non-game species that frequent the state.

About 45% of the state’s residents participate in wildlife viewing activities, yet only 1% of Iowa’s eligible taxpayers contribute directly to the betterment of this cause. In recent years, less than \$150,000 has been generated from the income tax form 1040 Fish/Wildlife Fund Checkoff.

Iowa’s non-game program is wide and varied, and includes population surveys of several non-game species, restoration of river otters and Peregrine Falcons, and supplying expertise on amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and all kinds of Iowa bird life. Educational programs about non-game wildlife have been increased in recent years because of Iowa’s non-game research and management efforts.

For more information about the Wildlife Diversity Program contact: Mark McInroy (Mac) at (515) 432-2823 or mark.mcinroy@dnr.state.ia.us.

From Our President Chris Caster

Thanks largely to Jim Scheib, Karen Disbrow, and Abel's Catering of North Liberty the Iowa City Bird Club once again fulfilled its obligation to the IOU by hosting its Fall meeting at the Wickiup Hill Natural Area. Judging from the amount of positive feedback received, it was a tremendous success. But that was also due in no small part to all the club members in attendance that simply made themselves useful—helping to carry things, working in the kitchen, cleaning up, assisting on fieldtrips, etc. Thank you everyone. It was noticed and appreciated.

We've had another great year as a club. The schedule has been full and meetings and field trips have been well attended. Club members made scheduled trips in the spring to Crex Meadows in northern Wisconsin for Sharp-tailed Grouse and southwest Iowa for Greater Prairie Chicken. Jim Scheib, Karen Disbrow, and Rick Hollis held a series of birding classes in April at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center combined with field trips that were well attended and produced a large number of new memberships. James Huntington's morning walks at Hickory Hill Park in May were also well-attended and great preparation for a Johnson County Spring Count that totaled 172 species. We hosted three terrific birds in the spring: a Snowy Plover at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, found by Jim Fuller and Tom Kent on the Spring Count; a Swallow-tailed Kite, discovered by Jim Scheib flying over his house, that delighted birders from around the state for two days; and a King Rail, discovered by Bob Dick and James Huntington along Greencastle Avenue, that responded to a tape for over a week until the rising floodwaters sent it on its way. Last year's Christmas Bird Count, the annual Hawk Watch in September and the aforementioned IOU Fall Meeting were all very enjoyable events. We have been blessed with an abundance of local talent that has made us the envy of many bird clubs around the state.

The club has come a long way from its beginnings in the 1970s as a group of friends that did an annual Christmas Bird Count together. Should we do anything more as an organization? Should we work to attract more people to birding? Should we do anything to bring birds to young people? What should we do as an organization to support other efforts like the Iowa Audubon Important Bird Area Program, the Macbride Raptor Project, the Johnson County Conservation Board, the Friends of Hickory Hill Park, the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, the Iowa National Heritage Foundation, etc.? Should we contribute monetarily to some of these efforts? If so, how should we raise the funds? How should we make decisions regarding the way club money is spent?

I feel that it is my responsibility to ask some of these questions and I feel that it is the responsibility of the membership to answer them. I am requesting that everyone thoughtfully reflect on a vision of what they wish the Iowa City Bird Club to be. I hope to have a special meeting on the winter schedule, open to all interested, to set a course for the years ahead. Thank you.



RENEWAL NOTICE



Our annual \$10 membership dues are payable now for the new year. Your dues will pay for an entire year of *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch*. Check your mailing label for the most recent year for which you have paid. If your label says "04", please send \$10 for 2005. 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. Members who have renewed by late December will receive their new 2005 membership card by January 1st, which entitles the bearer to a 10% discount on bird seed at Bird's Eye View in Coralville.

Swallow-tailed Kite over Iowa City

James E. Scheib

At 10:45 a.m. on Thursday, 3 June 2004, I was talking with a neighbor two houses up the street when I spotted a black-pointed wing-tip over nearby trees. I knew at once that it was nothing I recognized from the area and kept watching for more of the bird to appear. About 30 seconds later it floated out over the trees. I quickly ruled out a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and then realized it was a Swallow-tailed Kite, which I had seen in Florida and was unmistakable for any experienced birder. I yelled the discovery at the neighbor and then ran down the street with the dog in tow, grabbed the camera from the kitchen table, and took a couple of quick shots for the IOU Records Committee before calling Karole and Jim Fuller down the street. Jim and Karole came up the hill, got good looks, and then Jim hustled back down the hill. After he had added the bird to their yard list he put the sighting on the IA-Bird chat list shortly after 11 a.m.

For the next three days my time was spent keeping an eye out for the kite. By 2 p.m. that same day the Armstrongs had arrived from west of Des Moines and in short order had seen the bird from our yard on Longview Knoll, 1.5 miles north of I-80 off Dubuque Street in Iowa City. The kite reappeared repeatedly at tree top level hunting and feeding on insects throughout the day. Many times it was viewed coming in from the north near the upper pond off Lakeview Drive. At 3:00 p.m. a neighbor on Lakeview called the Fullers to say she had seen a Swallow-tailed Kite and had identified it from a bird book. It was last seen on Thursday, 3 June, about 4:50 pm. Local birders who gathered in the evening did not see it then but those who returned early the next morning did.

The second day it was more frequent in the morning than the afternoon but the Allens did see it in the afternoon after waiting several hours. My wife, Sharon, left work in mid-morning for a few minutes hoping to see it and as she drove down the street toward me I pointed up to the kite, which she had already spotted as she turned off Dubuque Street. Through 4:41 p.m. of the second day, all who came saw the bird either on Longview Knoll or at the pond off Lakeview Drive. Jay Gilliam and Chaiyan Kasorndorkbua got some great photos at the pond Friday morning on their way east to see the Kirtland's Warbler in Michigan. They have great photography equipment and it shows in the quality of their photos. Thanks to Jim Fuller, Joe Wilkinson of the DNR, Diana Pesek of *The Gazette* in Cedar Rapids, and me, the Friday, 4 June 2004 issue of *The Gazette* carried a short article and photograph on the front page of the sports section.

Based on the fact that the kite was considered a day migrant and that it had been seen after 4 p.m. on Friday, I was confident that it would still be in the vicinity on Saturday but it was not found despite constant coverage of both primary sites.

The Swallow-tailed Kite winters in South America and summers in the United States in coastal areas from Texas to South Carolina and in the tropics. A rehabilitated bird was tracked migrating south through Central America to central Brazil. Most of its food is gathered on the wing, including lizards from trees. It eats in the air and drinks while skimming the surface of ponds, lakes, and marshes. It has nested as far north as Minnesota but its present range is greatly decreased due to shooting and habitat destruction. Its genus *Elanoides* contains but one species: *Elanoides forficatus*, once known as the Fork-tailed Kite.

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A Common Tern Identification Challenge

Chris Caster

On September 12th a medium-sized tern was seen flying over the water east of Greencastle Ave. while a group of us were viewing shorebirds. The bird was initially presumed to be an adult Forster's Tern in basic plumage, as it seemed to have dark eye patches while being white elsewhere on the head. However when it lighted on a stump 100 yards to the west of the road we could see clearly that the black was not only around the eyes, but extended solidly around the nape as well. This would seem to clearly indicate that this was an adult Common Tern in basic plumage. However a debate ensued within the group over interpretation and significance of other details of this bird that brought the identification into question.

The usual medium-sized tern found in Iowa is the Forster's Tern. It nests in the north-central portion of the state, and north through Minnesota, the Dakotas, and southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The similar-looking Common Tern is rare in Iowa, but is regularly reported anytime from April through October. It breeds across much of southern Canada, excluding British Columbia. The only other medium-sized tern to occur in Iowa is the Arctic Tern, but it is accidental with only a couple of state records for this bird. In the previous week both Common and Forster's Terns had been reported from the HWA.

The primary debate over the identification began when the group couldn't decide if the bird had a carpal bar on its wing. A carpal bar is a dark-colored band seen on the upperwing that crosses the wing coverts from the tertial feathers to the carpal or wrist area. In the standing bird it can be seen as a dark smudge in the "shoulder area" (actually the wrist) of the folded wing. According to the Sibley and National Geographic field guides the Common Tern should show a carpal bar in winter plumage. Some thought that they could see a dark smudge, but others couldn't. I personally wasn't sure if the smudge I was seeing wasn't shading created by the fluffed scapular feathers over the folded wing. So the group wasn't sure if it was seeing a winter plumage Common Tern that lacked an obvious carpal bar or a Forster's Tern that hadn't completed its molt to basic plumage.

Other details that I personally noted: 1) During flight, the wing primaries seemed darkish both on the upperwing and below, but no dark wedge-shape on the upperwing could be discerned. 2) The tail was deeply forked, symmetrical, and appeared entirely white. 3) The standing bird had a thin dirty orange-red bill with a black tip. 4) The black area on the head ran from nearly the bill, widened as it extended through the eye and was continuous as it wrapped around the back of the head. The inferior border of the nape was sharply squared off and some very fine whitish streaks could be seen within the black on the nape. 5) The entire mantle was light gray with the folded primaries being obviously darker than the rest of the wing. 6) The folded primaries extended beyond the tip of the tail, by nearly an inch. 7) The cheek and throat were white, but the upper breast and belly appeared to be a light gray and nearly as dark as the mantle. 8) The legs were a redder orange than the bill and seemed rather longish.

Both Forster's and Common Terns attain their adult plumage after their second winter. We knew that we weren't looking at a juvenile bird because of the absence of any brown coloration in the head or mantle. We also knew that we weren't looking at a first-year immature bird because they have entirely black bills. Therefore we knew that this tern was an adult and at least two years old.

The details that seemed to identify this bird as a Forster's Tern included: 1) an all white tail; according to *Advanced Birding* by Kaufman the Common Tern should have blackish outer webs on the outer tail

feathers. 2) The lack of an obvious carpal bar on the wing; according to the National Geographic guide all basic plumage birds should have one. 3) The bill was more orange than red; according to Kaufman there is a tendency for the bill to be more red in Common Tern. 4) The legs seemed longish; according to Kaufman the legs on a Forster's Tern average longer than those of Common Tern.

The details that seemed to identify this bird as a Common Tern included: 1) the black nape; the Forster's wouldn't have this in basic plumage. 2) The extension of the primaries beyond the tip of the tail; Forster's should not have primaries extending well beyond the tip of the tail. 3) The gray underparts; Forster's Tern has white underparts that contrast with the gray mantle. 4) The darkish primaries; adult Common Terns in breeding plumage have primaries that are darker than the rest of the mantle, while in Forster's they are noticeably lighter than the rest of the mantle.

Although there weren't any other terns present for comparison, I had seen a group of five terns earlier in the week that were obviously basic plumage Forster's Tern as evidenced by their black cheek patches and solidly white napes. I thought it was unlikely that this tern, if a Forster's could be that far behind the others in its molt. According to Sibley the Forster's Tern acquires its basic plumage in August, which is consistent with the Forster's I had identified earlier. Additionally Sibley notes the Common Tern as acquiring its basic plumage in October. Both terns in full basic plumage should have all dark bills, and this bird still had a good amount of color on the bill. So it seemed to me that this was a bird that was obviously in transition from summer to winter plumage, which in September is consistent with Common Tern. This fact may explain the absence of an obvious carpal bar on this tern, since the alternate plumage adult Common Tern does not have one.

Although the group was already leaning somewhat towards an identification of Common Tern, the length of the bird's primaries gave our leanings more confidence. According to all the field guides a Forster's has tail feathers that extend well beyond the wingtips of the standing bird, while the Common's tail feathers extend only as far as the wingtips. Our bird had tail feathers that appeared actually shorter than the extension of the wingtips by an inch or so. But like some of the other field marks this too can be misleading. Wear on the tail feathers can make a Forster's tail appear shorter than what would be expected; however, the view the group had of the bird was in direct profile and we all could agree that the primaries did extend beyond the tip of the tail slightly. Certainly the tail wasn't obviously longer than the primaries as would be the case if this were a Forster's Tern.

Trying to decide what observations were most significant was difficult. Trying to decide what observations were valid was equally difficult, especially without any other terns present for comparison. The legs could appear longish due to stance and trim of belly feathers. The primaries on both birds in late summer can appear darkish due to wear. The gray color to the breast could have been influenced by the way the sunlight interacted with the curvature of the body. The lack of black discerned in the tail feather webbing could have been influenced by the difficulty of getting a good look of the bird in flight. Was the bill truly thin?

The medium sized terns can provide some identification challenges and it seems important to consider the entire bird before reaching any definite conclusions. This is solid advice for most bird identifications. Lighting, feather wear, molt, and individual variation make reliance on isolated field marks precarious. Most misidentifications probably result from such reliance. Our field guides can't provide us with a drawing of every bird we are going to encounter and many individual birds may defy certain identification, even by experienced birders. The group decided that it was observing a Common Tern, but only the bird knows for sure.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

July 24, Squaw Creek Park. We joined Jim Durbin of Marion from 9 – 11:30 p.m. for moth observations. It was 59°, a very cool evening for July. Jim had set up a screen of white sheets, illuminated by a black light, a few feet from the edge of the woods. We sat in lawn chairs and waited for moths to land on the sheets. We could then go up and observe them or catch them. We saw 30-50 individuals of 20 different species. The larger species were not out because it was too cool. A perfect evening for this activity would be 80° and humid. But all in all it was a great evening and a wonderful experience that I hope to repeat on a warmer night next year.

Participants: Karen Disbrow, Mary Noble.
– Karen Disbrow

August 19, Annual Picnic. For the first time, we held our annual picnic at the Hickory Hill Park Pavilion, located near the North Dodge Street/Conklin Lane entrance. Some fall warblers had been seen there earlier in the week, but everything was quiet on this evening.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Chris Caster and Terry Lindquist with Benjamin and Emma, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Mike Dooley, Therese Guedon, James Huntington, Dave and Darlene Kyllingstad, Ramona McGurk, John and Gail McLure.

– Karen Disbrow

August 22, Hickory Hill Park and Hawkeye Wildlife Area. The day was clear, with temperatures rising rapidly from 55° to almost 80° by 1 p.m. We did a quick walk-through of Hickory Hill Park, hoping for fall land bird migrants. We found a few warblers: Canada, Chestnut-sided, and Black-and-white. There were lots of Red-eyed Vireos. We saw two Broad-winged Hawks sitting in a dead elm tree.

The adult flew immediately, but the young bird showed no inclination to move.

We hustled over to Hawkeye Wildlife Area to the Babcock Access and walked around to observe the shorebirds from a better angle. Here, we were able to observe, at fairly close quarters, Pectoral, Least, Semipalmated, Baird's, and Spotted Sandpipers. Huge numbers of pelicans moved in the distance, and Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets foraged in the shallows. Large numbers of swallows, including mostly Bank but also Barn, Cliff, and Tree, swirled around us, gathering also on small branches at the edge of the water.

We moved to Greencastle Avenue where cooperative Solitary Sandpipers were seen. Round Pond was pretty dead. A quick stop at the James Avenue bend revealed few waders. We drove around to the north side of Hawkeye and walked down to the water. This allowed for an easy study of the smaller shorebirds which we had seen earlier.

Participants: Jean Allgood, Brady Belcher, Chris Caster, Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Therese Guedon, James Huntington (leader), Susan Jacques, Dave Kyllingstad, Ken Lowder, Ramona McGurk, John McLure, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible, Pete Wickham.

Birds (56 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Broad-winged Hawk, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted

Nuthatch, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Canada Warbler, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *James Huntington*

August 29, Hickory Hill Park and Hawkeye Wildlife Area. We had a perfect clear morning to start our search for warblers at Hickory Hill Park. Two days of rain had ended the afternoon before, and there was some concern that the warbler populations would have left that evening to continue their southward journey. However, the birds themselves chose not to follow this logic and we found several flocks to work with, including one near the dam large enough to occupy us for a good forty-five minutes. We had hardly disembarked from our cars when we were already pointing our binoculars at a couple of striking Blackburnian Warblers cavorting in the company of Red-eyed Vireos, in the shrubbery and small trees bordering the shelter area lawn. Another small flock appeared along the edge of the woods close to the shelter itself. Several fall Chestnut-sided Warblers were present, but we also caught a Black-and-white and Magnolia Warbler before this company drifted back into the woods.

We then made our way to what leader James Huntington is fond of referring to as the Magic Corner, along the dam area. In this particular case, the magic was operating ahead of schedule, for a major warbler flock was working the trees to one side of the clearing before the walk up the side of the dam. Highlights here included Blue-winged, Golden-winged, and Mourning Warbler, all good birds in the fall season, as well as a Nashville and fall Bay-breasted Warbler.

We then ascended the dam and walked toward the Magic Corner, the area before the entrance to the south canyon woods walk. Our first magic bird was an imperturbable young Yellow-billed Cuckoo, who sat patiently on an open perch as we discussed the imperfections of his less-than-

adult plumage. The vireo family made a good showing in the corner, with the Warbling and Philadelphia branches joining their ubiquitous Red-eyed cousins, offering us a laboratory for learning the art of separating these birds during the fall. Several of us later believed we were hearing the song of the Philadelphia as well, which had disappeared farther into the woody edges after giving us just enough of a glimpse to identify it. Here we also added another Blue-winged Warbler sighting, at least the eighth Blue-winged seen at Hickory Hill Park to that point in the season.

Not much more awaited us at the park, including during the walk through the often rich south canyon, although here John McLure managed to gather two edible mushroom species, a coral fungus and a large blewit. Another clearing, toward the Bloomington Street entrance, did hold a beautiful Yellow-throated Vireo, giving us four vireo species for a late-August outing.

From Hickory Hill Park and warblers we traveled north to Hawkeye Wildlife Area and, hopefully, shorebirds and waders. However, the rains of the past week had raised the reservoir level to a foot above its normal summer level, and few shorebirds were interested in such overly wet conditions. We stopped first at Greencastle Ave., which was very high on both sides. There were no shorebirds to speak of, but in scoping the distant snags to the east, we happened on a perched Peregrine Falcon as well as a young Bald Eagle.

The shorebirds were snubbing us, but the egrets felt more at home than ever on the reservoir. A good thirty Great Egrets were crowded among the willow shoots on a sandbar in the channel as we approached Babcock Access. Egrets were scattered here and there elsewhere around the reservoir, and at last we spotted one which was discernibly smaller than its neighbors, at the edge of an inlet to the southeast. To view it, we were facing toward the overhead sun, but generally we thought we could detect yellow at the base of the bill, indicating a Snowy Egret. A few of us decided to leave the parking area and trek around the shore of the reservoir to get a

better look. Along the walk we kicked up a few American Pipits from the grass and sandy soil. Eventually we eased up close enough to our bird to gain an excellent view of what was now clearly a Snowy Egret. Before long, though, it lifted and eventually disappeared down behind cover in the far northwest part of the reservoir. We continued to scan the water, and our best find was four Caspian Terns roosting on Sand Point, yet farther to the east. As we made our way back to Babcock Access, James let us know via walky-talky that the remaining party was packing it in for the day.

Chris Caster and I, still unfulfilled despite our Snowy Egret, continued alone to Round Pond, which proved fruitless except for a few more Great Egrets. From there we decided to check Sandy Beach, although neither of us honestly held much hope for seeing anything. Indeed, once there we had to content ourselves with making sure a Franklin's Gull out on the water wasn't in reality a Laughing Gull, a truly desperate ploy to make something interesting of this visit. Checking various points on Lake Macbride and Coralville Lake turned up nothing of consequence regarding birds, but a power boat field guide undoubtedly would have kept us occupied for hours.

Participants: Danny Akers, Jean Allgood, Brady Belcher, Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Linda Donelson, Mike Dooley, Vicki Eaton, Tony Franken, James Huntington (leader), Susan Jacques, John and Gail McLure, Diana Pesek, Jim and Sharon Scheib and dog Tootsie.

Birds (74 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy

Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Canada Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

– Mike Dooley

September 12, Hickory Hill Park and Hawkeye Wildlife Area. We were delighted to have along David Chaffin, a very experienced birder from Cleveland, TN who happened to be working temporarily in Mason City and hoped to increase his Iowa bird list. As it also happened, he was a friend of James Huntington. The two entertained us with many stories of interesting birders and bird chases from around the country.

Our first stop was Hickory Hill Park. We didn't see much until we neared the place James calls the "Magic Corner". We spent a lot of time there and were rewarded with four vireos, a number of Least Flycatchers, and a Swainson's Thrush. Cormorants overhead may have been a new HHP bird for James.

In the South Canyon at HHP, we had David get out his screech-owl tape and let it run continuously for maybe 10 minutes. This really brought in a group of chickadees and nuthatches to investigate and scold. And a number of warblers trickled through as well. I'm not sure if they were attracted to the owl tape or the chickadee hoard, but we got looks at a variety.

After leaving HHP, we made a routine rest stop at the Handi-mart at the I-380/North Liberty exit and then it was on to Greencastle Ave. There was some good shorebird habitat to the east of the road. We set up our scopes in the shade of some willows and got nice looks at 28 Stilt Sandpipers in basic or winter plumage. Lesser Yellowlegs were also present for comparison. Pectoral, Baird's, and Least Sandpipers were also viewed nearby. A single Broad-winged Hawk was spied soaring at a distance. A brief stop at the Babcock Access added Horned Larks, but little else.

The best bird of the outing was a single Common Tern. This bird produced a lengthy debate over its identification and I myself learned quite a lot in the process. More on this bird's identification can be found in a sidebar article elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks to all who attended this beautiful late summer outing. It was really a lot of fun.

Participants: Jean Allgood, Chris Caster (leader), David Chaffin, Bob and Dara Dick, Drew and Judith Dillman, Linda Donelson, Vicki Eaton, James Huntington, John McLure, Diana Pesek.

Birds (76 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Wood Duck, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Broad-winged Hawk, American Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, dowitcher sp., Wilson's Snipe, Common Tern, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Barred Owl, Common Nighthawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo,

Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

– Chris Caster

September 16, Meeting. Mike Dooley, graduate student in art history and recently back from a yearlong fellowship at the Smithsonian, gave us a talk on his research topic—Ornithological Art and the Early Audubon Societies Movement. Three very famous artist-ornithologists featured prominently in Mike's presentation. Their differing styles reflected their purposes and views regarding the birds' place in the natural world, which provided much social commentary.

Alexander Wilson (1766-1813) made an attempt to illustrate all the birds of North America with his *American Ornithology* (1808-1814). His primary purpose was to catalogue all the different species with a high degree of accuracy of form. Little else was considered in the presentations. Each of his plates usually included a number of species, all different and having little or no taxonomic relationship. Mike had a slide of one of Wilson's plates with a Louisiana [Western] Tanager next to a Lewis's Woodpecker and a Clark's Crow [Nutcracker].

John James Audubon (1785-1851) worked on a similar project, *Birds of America* (1827-1838), but he adopted a very different style, dedicating a single plate to each species. Audubon conveyed a sense that birds are very unique, animated, beautiful, and interesting creatures. In contrast with Wilson, Audubon imbued his

birds with noble and heroic qualities. For each plate he created very artistic vignettes, often with the birds in dramatic poses that provided something of the bird's life history—the way they interacted with each other and the world around them. Mike showed us his plate of a group of Blue Jays caught in the act of egg robbing. Audubon also had a talent for posing his birds in a way that revealed the majority of the birds' field marks, and so his illustrations were heuristic on a number of levels.

Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927) was the most popular ornithological illustrator of the Progressive Era, that period from the 1890s to World War I, which corresponded with the rise of the state Audubon Societies and birdwatching as a middle-class leisure activity. Fuertes continued Audubon's model of recreating the living bird in its natural setting, but instead of Audubon's mannered, melodramatic poses, Fuertes's birds behaved more as the birdwatcher would see them through opera glasses. His illustrations appeared in many of the pioneering field guides.

In the 1890s bird lovers began to organize against the millinery trade and the first Audubon Societies were formed. The Massachusetts's Audubon Society was the flagship group, begun in 1896, and independent from the National Audubon Society to this day. Mike showed us a slide of a page in a catalogue selling women's hats. The hats were decorated with all sorts of feathers, some with entire wings or whole small birds. Bird artists began to illustrate the proliferating popular birdwatching literature with imagery that seemed to promote the birder's agenda. Bird subjects were ennobled as lords of both the wilderness and the suburban orchard. Invariably the bird would be a lone male in full breeding plumage, dominant within the composition, and placed above the horizon. The idealized landscape over which the bird reigned was presented as unstained by human activity. This reflected the attitude of many in this early conservation movement, that birds were special citizens in the purest realm of God's creation. The improbable close-up view

of the bird lends the birdwatcher a sense of sharing dominion over the idealized environment with the bird, and therefore over the proper attitude toward birds and nature as well. The literature often seemed to contrast the Audubonist with the rank and file, such as farmers and immigrant hunters, who were ignorant of the regal splendor of birds in the natural world. Although this imagery did promote the early conservation movement, it also cast the movement, dominated by fairly well to do Easterners, as elitist—a view that hinders the movement somewhat today.

The first field guides didn't provide what present day birders would consider to be much useful information for locating and identifying species, but they did hammer home the essential usefulness of birds to agriculture—a point that is often emphasized today. Interestingly, women authored many of the early guides. *Birdcraft*, a field guide for beginners by Mabel Osgood Wright, founder of the Connecticut Audubon Society, was published in 1897. Florence Merriam, an early member of the American Ornithologists' Union, wrote *Birds of Village and Field* in 1898, aimed at the suburban housewife. A year later, Frank Chapman of the American Museum of Natural History and founder of the Christmas Bird Count started *Bird-Lore*, a journal intended to be the official voice of the state Audubon Societies. It was created with the average backyard birder in mind and later became *Audubon* magazine.

In the early 1900s bird photography became the rage. Fearing that many of the birds would soon vanish, there was a rush by many to document all the birds. Mike drew an interesting parallel with the rush to document vanishing Native Americans during the same period. Birds were romanticized as a noble race of nature in the same way as the American Indian.

Herbert K. Job's *Wild Wings*, published in 1905, was a series of seven or eight lengthy essays on expeditions to photograph nesting colonies of endangered birds. Seemingly inspired by the

likes of Teddy Roosevelt, it was hard to judge by the narratives who were being more heroicized—the endangered birds or the intrepid photographers who risked life and limb. Photographs were often made to demonstrate the courageous feats performed to capture the birds on film. These entertaining real life adventure documentaries played into the American mythology of western exploration, and must have been very inspiring to birders and conservationists, as well as being useful for the recruitment of the rank and file.

Thanks Mike for a very interesting presentation. Good luck with the dissertation.

Attendees: Jean and Ed Allgood, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Lucy David, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Mike Dooley, John and Susan Drysdale, Roger Fisher, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Dave Kyllingstad, Ramona McGurk, Jim Miller, John and Darlyne Neff, Anne and Ed Perkins, Diana Pesek, Rosemarie Petzold, Jim Scheib, Bill Scheible

– *Chris Caster*

September 18, Annual Hawk Watch. There are no plane tickets, backpacks, or hotel stays, yet every fall thousands of visitors head south for the winter. Traveling on powerful wing beats and fueled by instinct and small mammals and insects, the annual fall migration begins. You may see the smooth soar of a Bald Eagle, a rising kettle of Turkey Vultures, or the flap-flap-glide of a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Whatever your reward may be, this incredible movement of hunters inspires many to wake up early every third Saturday in September just to stare at the sky.

Once again, the weather yielded excellent hawk watching conditions. For more than a dozen years, birders from “What’s a bird?” all the way to “Hey, did you hear the *tzeedl tzeedl tzeedl ti ti ti tzeeeee* of that Cerulean Warbler?” have flocked to their Stainbrook Preserve post to count passing raptors. Viewing the migration of such impressive numbers of birds is awe-

inspiring, to say the least. Equally amazing is the fact that some species are setting out on an often-treacherous journey that can span over six thousand miles.

The Macbride Raptor Center strives to spark enthusiasm for wildlife and its conservation. Hawkwatch is one event we hope accomplishes that goal, along with providing informational and educational value to such a fascinating experience. By promoting awareness and responsibility in nature, we hope to reduce the incidents of injured raptors and wildlife in general. Greater active awareness will ensure more and more fall seasons of magnificent migration.

Special thanks to Ed Saehler and Meredith Caskey for running the songbird banding station. Once again, Ed and Meredith were on hand to share their passion for nature. Many visitors were able to get close-up looks at chickadees, nuthatches and a Tufted Titmouse. You never know, maybe we will see these banded birds back at our feeders.

Thanks again to the Iowa City Bird Club, for joining in on the activities. Several ICBC members were on hand at the Stainbrook Preserve overlook to identify and count the migrating raptors. Next year, make sure to stop by and ask what has been seen and even how to identify some of the birds. The ICBC is always excited to have the opportunity to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with novice birders, young and old.

Raptors (7 species, 233 birds): Turkey Vulture 62, Osprey 3, Bald Eagle 2 (1 adult, 1 immature), *accipiter* sp. 3, Broad-winged Hawk 157, Red-tailed Hawk 4, *buteo* sp. 1, Peregrine Falcon 1.

Other Birds (20 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Chimney Swift, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American

Crow, Barn Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, American Goldfinch.

Participants: Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Julie Englander, Ramona McGurk, Edward and Anne Perkins, Diana Pesek, Ron and Denyse Price, Viana Rockel, Tammy Thweatt, and many others.

– *Phil Cronin*

October 3, Snake Creek Marsh and Saylorville Reservoir. We departed at 6:30 a.m. and after a couple of bathroom stops arrived at Snake Creek Marsh in SE Greene County around 9:30. In an attempt to sweep for rails, we tied four 2-liter bottles partially filled with gravel together along a twenty-foot piece of twine. This was stretched between two of us as we walked, while the others walked behind to spot birds. Although we didn't flush any rails, the method did seem to have promise as a number of sparrows flew out. It certainly would be a useful technique for just a couple of birders attempting to sweep a larger area. But the sparrows were exceedingly elusive and trying to pull the twine with one hand, while attempting to get the binoculars on a fleeing bird with the other hand proved difficult. It was also difficult to pull the bottles through the taller marsh grass that surrounded the wetter areas that James insisted we walk to find Sharp-tailed Sparrows. So the bottles were abandoned within 45 minutes along with our coats as the sun was beginning to beat down.

We walked a variety of habitats and pished our darnedest to get the sparrows to emerge from their hiding places. I'd say this was successful with about 5% of the birds we saw. We did identify one Nelson's Sharp-tail and one LeConte's Sparrow positively. Those were two of our target birds. The third target bird was the mythical Yellow Rail, which we failed to find. A single Sora was the only rail, seen briefly as it flushed. Sedge Wrens and Harris's Sparrows were fun to see. And encounters with hunting

Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were exciting.

We left the marsh around 1 o'clock to get some food and take a break. Our next stop was the Jester Campground at the Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. There we found 3 Franklin's Gulls amongst the Ring-billed Gulls, but a short walk in the woods was exceedingly quiet. At the Lincoln Access south of Jester we walked the weeds around some small ponds and again found Sharp-tailed Sparrows. The brush wasn't so heavy here and we were able to view the birds more easily. We continued on to the spillway area below the Saylorville Dam. Lots of Ring-billed Gulls were found here along with many cormorants. A lone Franklin's Gull was seen on the rocks below the spillway, and a lone Bonaparte's Gull was interesting to watch as it flew back and forth across the nearby pond.

It was an all-day trip as advertised and as enjoyable as hoped. Most of us got home around 8 pm. Thanks to Linda Donelson for agreeing to drive.

Participants: Brady Belcher, Chris Caster (leader), Linda Donelson, James Huntington, Diana Pesek.

Birds (48 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Franklin's Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Barn Swallow, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, American Robin, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Cardinal,

Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark sp.,
American Goldfinch.

– *Chris Caster*

October 9, Lake Macbride. Six birders turned out for a club outing to the Lake Macbride area. We had perfect fall weather – crisp morning temperatures, abundant sunshine and no bugs bothering us until the latter part of the morning.

We checked a couple of areas. The first was the trail across from the parking lot on 200th Street, near the Cottage Reserve area. We walked a short distance down this trail and were treated to throngs of passerines, including a few yellow-rumps, a couple of Orange-crowned Warblers and many Cedar Waxwings. The waxwings stayed close and provided very nice views. Our trip down this path was cut short when we spotted a very odd-looking raptor sitting in a tree on the other side of the water. Hopes were high! Binoculars didn't provide a close-enough view of this far-away bird, so we headed back to our vehicles for our scopes. But it turned out to be a Red-tailed Hawk with a branch in front of it, which distorted the image through the binoculars and made us think/hope it was something a little more rare!

From here, four of us continued on to Macbride Nature-Recreation Area, where we parked back by the Raptor Center area and walked the trails there, including the bluebird trail. Our highlights from this walk included a migrating Hermit Thrush and a Winter Wren. The little wren paralleled our path, continuing to move ahead of us and providing us with repeated views of the busy little bird, which we all enjoyed.

Participants: Jack Bagford, Tony Franken, Dave Kyllingstad, Dick Otis, Diana Pesek (leader), Jim Scheib.

Birds (25 species): Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch,

Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird.

– *Diana Pesek*

October 24, Local Areas. This trip was scheduled for Cone Marsh, but due to the lack of waterfowl and abundance of hunters at that location, we visited several other local areas instead. It was a beautiful sunny morning – 45° and clear with light winds. We visited Lake Macbride, Mehaffey Bridge, and Greencastle Avenue. The highlight of the day was on 220th Avenue near Lake Macbride, when a Pileated Woodpecker flew overhead.

Participants: Mark Brown, Barry Buschelman, Karen Disbrow (leader), Linda Donelson, Vicki Eaton, Linda Fisher, Garrison Kline, Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib, Bob and Joan Stearns, Sandra Stevens.

Birds (41 species): Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, American Goldfinch.

– *Karen Disbrow*

November 7, Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, Linn County. The trip began sunny with the temperature in the mid-thirties and a northerly wind. On the way to Pleasant Creek we looped around the Cedar Rapids airport and

were rewarded with several Horned Larks and a Snow Bunting. South of Palo near the sewage ponds we met Danny Akers looking at an American Pipit.

Arriving at Pleasant Creek several Cedar Rapids area birders met us on the southeast dam overlook where they were looking at a pair of White-winged Scoters. Other birds present were Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls.

Proceeding to the camping area on the north side of the dam we found the Northern Shrike that had previously been reported staying in the area. James Huntington and Diana Pesek left for the southwest boat ramp area. While we were in the campground area a bird identified by Chris Edwards as a sub-adult Golden Eagle soared closely overhead. Shortly thereafter Diana called on an FRS radio and notified us that she and James had just seen the Golden Eagle as well.

We checked Cedar Lake on the return to Iowa City to look for the Black-crowned Night-Heron, but we could not locate it. Few waterfowl were present.

Participants: Danny Akers, Bob and Dara Dick, Vicki Eaton, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Tony Franken, Roger Heidt, James Huntington, Cathy Mandarino, Diana Pesek, Bob and Joan Stearns.

Birds (32 species): Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, White-winged Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, American Coot, Killdeer,

Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, American Pipit, Snow Bunting, Northern Cardinal, House Sparrow.

– Bob Dick

Swallow-tailed Kite

(Continued from page 4)

This appearance was only the third in Iowa since 1931, the others being 14–15 May 1992 at Cedar Falls in Black Hawk County and 14–15 September 2000 in Cerro Gordo County. This bird upheld the “recent” tradition of two-day stays in Iowa. Other recent northern appearances of single Swallow-tailed Kites were 6 June 1999, 7 and 10 May 2000 in Massachusetts; 6–19 August 2002 in Michigan; 26 May 2000 and 11 August 2002 in Minnesota; 8 August 2001 in Nova Scotia; and for a few days in May 2000 (last reported 10 May) at Point Pelee, Ontario.

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Birding Highlights in Johnson County, Fall 2004

Mike Dooley

Before the water levels on the reservoir were raised for the duck hunting season, Johnson County made a very strong showing in shorebirds for the fall season. Good wading birds were seen here and there as well. On the other hand, warbler reports were sparse in the county, although a few rarities did make their appearances. Fewer still were November reports of interesting waterfowl or related birds.

The first day of the fall season opened on a high note: Three adult RED KNOTS were discovered along the inlet on the west side of Sand Point at Hawkeye W.A., rare enough in their own right, but also a record second-earliest Iowa sighting for fall. A single Red Knot was relocated along the inlet several times over the next two days. During one of those searches, a RUDDY TURNSTONE was spotted at the end of the point. Elsewhere in the area during the first days of August, BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS continued from late July in the grassflats along the west side of the road to Babcock Access, and during one pursuit of the Buff-breasteds, an unusual flock of 13-14 LARK SPARROWS, adults and juveniles, flushed ahead of a birder's car. A LITTLE BLUE HERON in basic plumage was singled out among the Great Egrets east of Greencastle Ave. and lingered over several days.

On the other side of Hwy. 965, five LEAST BITTERNs were found via boat in the marsh area of the north arm of Lake Macbride. At least one was still being seen into mid-August.

Entering the second week in August, a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER, rare for fall in the interior states, appeared west of Sand Point. Other Sand Point birds included both BLACK-BELLIED and AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER, somewhat uncommon themselves in fall, and a single SANDERLING at the end of the point was relocated over several days. From below Amana Rd., a RUDDY TURNSTONE was discerned through the heat shimmer among shorebird flocks out on the spits in the middle of the reservoir.

The first migrating warbler report for the county came a few days past the midpoint of the month, when a visit to Hickory Hill Park produced BLACKBURNIAN, BLACK-AND-WHITE, MOURNING, and CANADA WARBLERS. Shortly afterward, an early YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER was on the grounds near the shelter, and over the weekend a CHESNUT-SIDED WARBLER was another new warbler visitor. That same weekend, back up to the reservoir, two SNOWY EGRETS were positively identified from Greencastle Ave. From one to three Snowy Egrets would continue in the area through early September. Meanwhile shorebirds east off Greencastle included eighteen STILT SANDPIPERS, the county's first report for the fall.

Entering the last week of August, notable warbler and shorebird reports were, on the whole, still a bit slow. A considerable spike occurred on a single day, at least as far as the shorebird sightings were concerned, from three different parties' outings in Johnson Co. The headliners were a remarkable group of seven RED KNOTS, all apparent molting adults, found a short but muddy walk east from Greencastle Ave. Earlier that day, another birder had picked out a WESTERN SANDPIPER from among peeps closer to the road. Neither species was relocated in subsequent searches. Meanwhile in the southern part of the county, a third group of birders found a somewhat lingering UPLAND SANDPIPER as well as a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER while scoping the expanses of manicured grass at the Nauman Sod Farm east of Hills. This particular outing had also produced two more fall MOURNING WARBLERS at Hickory Hill Park. As August waned, three parties accounted for four BLUE-WINGED and six GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS at the park on the month's final Saturday. The county's first BAY-

BREASTED WARBLER sighting for the fall turned up as well, and a nice look was had at a BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO. That Sunday, Iowa City Bird Club members identified two more each of BLUE-WINGED and GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS, as well as yet another MOURNING WARBLER and the first PHILADELPHIA VIREO report. Birders at Hickory Hill on the last day in August found a PILEATED WOODPECKER near the shelter and an early RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH in the south canyon woods. Two more Red-breasted Nuthatches were present in pines at St. Joseph Cemetery.

The first report of any note for September, which started off slowly as far as warblers and shorebirds were concerned, was of four AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS at the Nauman Sod Farm, found over the Labor Day weekend. All four plovers were relocated over the next couple of days. During one remarkably fruitless tour of Hickory Hill Park and environs, amidst a spell of clear, windless, hot days, the only bird to garner any enthusiasm was a PHILADELPHIA VIREO in Oakland Cemetery. As the rains of late August abated and the early September water levels settled down on the reservoir, the shorebird habitat at Hawkeye W.A. began to pick up, beginning with a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER spotted east of Babcock Access. Before long the menu from Sand Point included AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER, AMERICAN AVOCET, RUDDY TURNSTONE, and SANDERLING. At least one COMMON TERN was identified among the Forster's Terns roosting on the spits north of the point. Dominating the view from Sand Point, as is typical for September, were AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS, peaking by one count at 5400 birds. Babcock Access held its own as well, with AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, RUDDY TURNSTONE, and three very late WILLETS.

Meanwhile, warbler and other passerine highlights continued to be few and far between during the first week of September, with two calling VEERYS at Hickory Hill Park the only report of note.

Opening the second week in September, a number of birders chased an IBIS SPECIES in basic plumage off Greencastle Ave., some with success, but in the end this ibis turned out to be a 1.5-day wonder. As consolation a PEREGRINE FALCON, first noted in late August, was still seen scouting the shorebirds in the area. Soon after, an Iowa City Bird Club outing would identify a COMMON TERN from Greencastle, along with fifteen AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS and a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER. Over at Sand Point, the AMERICAN AVOCET and RUDDY TURNSTONE continued, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS joined the American Golden-Plovers, and SANDERLING numbers reached an impressive 36 individuals. Added to the mix were five BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS in the grassy spits east of the point.

Elsewhere, the first glimpse of a migrating NORTHERN HARRIER, a gray adult male, came at the Clear Creek Trail area west of Iowa City.

Hickory Hill Park picked up some speed heading toward mid September, with warbler finds including GOLDEN-WINGED, NORTHERN PARULA, a rare fall sighting of CONNECTICUT WARBLER, and MOURNING WARBLER. Joining the warblers was the state's first report of BLUE-HEADED VIREO for the season, and shortly past the mid-month point, the county's first RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET. Meanwhile another GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER was spotted in nearby St. Joseph Cemetery.

Treks out to Sand Point in the last days before its closure for the season on the 15th were rewarded with now ten BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS, while a RUDDY TURNSTONE still lingered as well. SANDERLING numbers remained healthy at sixteen individuals. Over at Greencastle Ave. AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS remained, now down to five birds. They were joined by two SANDERLINGS and the state's first reports for the season, on different days, of both AMERICAN

PIPIT and LE CONTE'S SPARROW. At Babcock Access, a juvenile MERLIN, the county's first sighting, was an unexpected flyby while scoping the shorebirds. A few BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS were west of the access, identified in basic plumage. Highlights from the Iowa City Bird Club's annual hawkwatch at Stainbrook Preserve, overlooking Coralville Lake, included three OSPREYS, a PEREGRINE FALCON, and over 150 BROAD-WINGED HAWKS, most of the latter during a single 90-minute span. Later that evening, another 92 Broad-winged Hawks were seen in two loosely connected kettles over Iowa City, but a day later both totals were dwarfed when more than a thousand Broad-wingeds were seen migrating over Macbride Nature Recreation Area.

The Iowa City Bird Club sponsored the semi-annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union over the last weekend in September. Friday morning before things got underway, another RED KNOT was found at Hawkeye W.A., this time west of Greencastle Ave., but it had disappeared by that evening. On the same visit a juvenile BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON emerged briefly from the cattails along the road. Meanwhile a group on Saturday looked up to see another four BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS flying overhead at Babcock Access. GOLDEN-WINGED and CAPE MAY WARBLERS were found at Hickory Hill Park the day before the official outing there, which Sunday morning would produce a robust eighteen warbler species, certainly the largest concentration reported in Iowa for a slow fall. Although another Cape May Warbler turned up, the gems of the list were two male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS, seen not only during the morning but relocated by numerous birders early that afternoon. They were found yet again, a little surprisingly, the following day. Trumping even this pair, both a female BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER and an adult male PINE WARBLER were discovered at Kent Park following the IOU's compilation lunch, in the pines to the northeast, along with two CAPE MAY WARBLERS. Also in the area were a surprising seventeen RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES.

During the first week of October, a MERLIN was viewed among the snags east of Greencastle Ave., and another visit to Greencastle turned up four NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS. One or two sharp-taileds continued to be found there into mid month. Near sunset one evening, an estimated half million or more RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS made for a mesmerizing spectacle in the skies around Greencastle. Elsewhere, along the shore above the Coralville Reservoir dam a single SANDERLING was one of a handful of shorebirds present, and a WINTER WREN was scurrying about the creek in Hickory Hill Park's south canyon. Into the second week of the month, a lingering BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was tagging along with the Yellow-rumped Warblers at Oakland Cemetery. A bicycle ride at Waterworks Park just north of Iowa City turned up two EURASIAN TREE SPARROWS along the largest pond. Halfway through October the first report for HERMIT THRUSH was a pair seen at Hickory Hill Park. Also in Iowa City, one of the more peculiar sightings of the year was of a NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL perched on the balcony of an apartment building, the season's first report for the state. Over in Coralville, four PINE SISKINS visited a backyard feeder. Coming into the final week of October, a rare Johnson County report of SURF SCOTER came from Lake Macbride near the Mehaffey Bridge.

November opened nicely with a RED-NECKED GREBE on the lower Coralville Reservoir, spotted south of the beach at Sugar Bottom and relocated in the general area over the next couple of days. The first-ever posted Johnson County report of the newly designated species CACKLING GOOSE was of a flock at Water Works Park during the second week of the month; another flock appeared the next day at Coralville City Park. At the other end of town, seven HORNED GREBES were spread around the S&G Materials sandpit. In northeast Iowa City a lingering TURKEY VULTURE was gliding over a neighborhood around mid month, and thirty-three PINE SISKINS were feeding off catkins on a small birch tree. As many as twenty were still showing up there off and on for another week. Elsewhere, the

county's first fall report of ROSS'S GOOSE was of a pair that settled on the beach at Kent Park for a few days. A PILEATED WOODPECKER was observed near the Lake Macbride sailboat storage, while another was found, appropriately enough, in the area of Woodpecker Trail off the lower Coralville Reservoir. Also on the lower reservoir, a dozen SNOW BUNTINGS were working the beach above the dam.

Somewhat poetically, the fall season ended where Iowa's state checklist ends: as the final week of November began, a new Johnson County location for EURASIAN TREE SPARROW emerged. A flock of at least a dozen birds was at Sandtown Cemetery near the Nauman Sod Farms, just east of Hills, and were relocated a few days after the first sighting. As fits the Eurasian's expansion pattern, the cemetery is close to the Iowa River.



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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.

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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.

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