
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 2

September 2005

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.

September 10, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Birding and Boating at Lake Macbride. Hosts Richard and Nancy Lynch will provide watercraft (pontoon boat, canoes and kayaks) or you may bring your own. Brunch will be served after the outing. Please call Richard and Nancy at 624-3014 if you plan to attend.

September 15, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Chris Caster will give a presentation on raptor identification in anticipation of the club's annual hawk watch.

September 17, Saturday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Annual Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve. Enjoy the hawk watching on the hillside at Stainbrook, or attend one of several raptor programs at the Raptor Center. See page 3 for more information.

October 2, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Snake Creek Marsh in Greene County. We will search for marsh birds including Sharp-tailed and LeConte's Sparrows and the elusive Yellow Rail. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

October 9, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area for sparrows, waterfowl, and other migrants. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

October 13, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Jim Scheib, always with something to share, will present on his trip to Iceland this summer.

October 16, Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Margrieta Delle Memorial at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. There will be a dedication for the bench which the club purchased with donations in Margrieta's name, followed by a bird hike. Refreshments will be provided. For more information call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

November 5, Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Ann Johnson Book Signing at Bird's Eye View in Coralville. Stop by and chat with AJ and pick up her new book, *Iowa Birds*, which is reviewed in this issue on page 6.

Continued on next page →

Schedule – continued

November 6, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area in Linn County for loons, ducks, and grebes. Ken Lowder, 351-1207.

November 17, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Ty Smedes, professional nature photographer and birder from Urbandale will present on his trips to East Africa. He currently has photos of over 100 African birds and he promises shots of the mega fauna as well.

December 18, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Mark your calendars now! Additional details will be provided in the next newsletter.

Other Dates of Note

September 11, Sunday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Pelican Festival at Jester Park on Saylorville Lake near Des Moines.

September 23-25. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting at Lakeside Laboratory on West Okoboji Lake in NW Iowa. The banquet speaker will be Dr. Robert Ridgely, Vice President of the American Bird Conservancy, who will speak on "The Preservation of Birds Through Private Conservation". Field trips will visit the area's abundant wetlands. For more details visit www.iowabirds.org or call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

October 13-16. Midwest Birding Symposium in the Quad Cities. Guided field trips, exhibits, nationally-recognized speakers, and much more. Guest speakers include Don and Lillian Stokes, Bill and Elsa Thompson, and Bobby Harrison. For more information call (563) 322-3911 or visit www.visitquadcities.com/midwestbirding.

November 11-13. Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival at Lansing in NE Iowa. Field trips, programs, live music and more. For additional details contact Ric Zarwell at Ric.Zarwell@mchsi.com.

Remembering Bud Gode Karen Disbrow

I first met Bud Gode at the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Davenport in 1989. Carol Thompson had invited me to camp with Bud, Rick Hollis, and herself. That was the beginning of a foursome which attended many IOU meetings together.

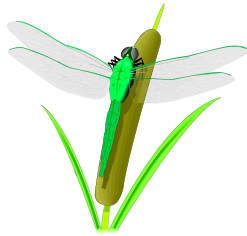
Bud was a true renaissance man. He was a civil engineer who had worked as a county engineer in at least two counties in Iowa. After his retirement in 1987, he was well known on campus for taking biology courses to expand his

knowledge of nature. I mentioned Lakeside Lab to him and in 1990 he started taking field courses up at Lakeside, including Ornithology, Field Ecology, Entomology and Mycology. He met Bob Cruden and together they conducted a 7-year study of Iowa's odonata (dragonflies and damselflies). Bud published two papers on this subject. The professors at Lakeside all wanted to be like Bud when they retired; his love of life and exploration of nature and new things made him an unusual retiree.

Bud was President of the Iowa City Bird Club for many years. He volunteered at the Museum of Natural History and at the Raptor Center. This spirit of volunteerism was part and parcel

of Bud. In later years Bud and his wife Mary relocated to Green Valley, Arizona. He immediately became involved with Friends of Madera Canyon, starting an educational program for fourth graders and working on research projects such as trogon nesting and insects of Madera Canyon.

Bud died May 1, 2005 from pneumonia following surgery for lung cancer. He never smoked, but his father was a heavy smoker and died from lung cancer. His ashes are spread in eight different locations in Madera Canyon. Each family member took a portion and went to a favorite spot in the canyon that they had shared with Bud. Bud's family requests that donations be made in his memory to the Friends of Madera Canyon, P.O. Box 1203, Green Valley, AZ 85622.



2005 Birdathon: A Success for Iowa Birds

We held our very first Birdathon this year in conjunction with our annual Spring Count. Members solicited pledges per bird species found on the Spring Count in order to raise money for the Iowa Audubon Important Bird Areas Program. Most of these solicitors also participated in the Spring Count. Additionally, IBA Program Coordinator Ric Zarwell and wife Betty drove down from Lansing, IA to help.

The money raised far exceeded our expectations for our very first fund-raising event. We used a count of 166 species as a basis for contributions—although the actual count proved to be 167. Forty-nine people, the vast majority of which were non-ICBC members, contributed a total of \$1,061 towards bird conservation

efforts in Iowa. Donations ranged from \$5 to \$94.

We plan on doing this again next year. Thanks very much to all those who helped and contributed. And thanks to Dick and Gerry Tetrault for hosting the Zarwells during their stay.

Dues Increase Approved

At the April meeting a vote was taken of those in attendance as to whether to raise the ICBC's annual dues from \$10 to \$15. The extra funds are deemed necessary to pay for the cost of our club website and to provide stipends/mileage reimbursement for speakers who travel to our meetings.

Thanks in large measure to the draw of presenter Jim Dinsmore, we had an exceptional turnout for the April meeting. A secret ballot was held and the membership voted overwhelmingly in support of the increase, 38 to 1.

Dues for the 2006 calendar year will be \$15 payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch. Student dues will remain at the \$10 amount.

Annual Hawk Watch September 17

Bring your family and friends for a migration celebration! Saturday, September 17th, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Bring binoculars, blankets, lawn chairs and picnic lunches for hawk watching on the ridge at Stainbrook State Preserve, located along Mehaffey Bridge Road just north of the entrance to Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Hourly programs will be held at the Raptor Center at nearby Macbride Nature-Recreation Area, including hawk identification at 9 a.m., Osprey introduction in Iowa at 10 a.m., and live raptor programs at 12 and 1 p.m.. For more information call 398-5495 or 335-9293.

2005 Johnson County Spring Count

Chris Caster

The Spring Count was held on the 7th of May. Temperatures ranged from about 60 in the morning to the low 80s in late afternoon. At sunrise it appeared that we would be in for some rain showers, but the threat soon passed and the remainder of the day was nearly ideal. Actually the conditions were unbelievably good considering we had experienced record low temps in the week preceding the count date. Thanks to the dedication of a large number of participants our count total was a very respectable 167.

We had good representation from all the bird groups, but once again shorebird species led the way. The shoreline and shallow waters at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area produced 23 species. One of these turned out to be the best bird of the day, a Black-necked Stilt first spotted at the Babcock Access by Ric Zarwell. Fortunately the bird was content to forage in the same location most of the day and many got to see it.

The second best bird was the flock of Smith's Longspurs first discovered by Chris Edwards at Babcock Access nearly a month earlier. These birds pass through Iowa every spring, but are faithful to specific areas for migratory stops and are seldom recorded in Johnson County. This flock was sometimes counted at over forty birds. Amazingly 15 were still present on the count date. They continued at least through the 8th of May to set a new record late date for Iowa.

I'm going to call it a tie for third best bird between the Summer Tanager found at Hanging Rock Woods by Mike Dooley, Bill Scheible, and Ken Lowder and the Pine Siskins found by Chris Edwards. Although regular in woods along Iowa's southern border, Summer Tanager is also seldom recorded in Johnson County. Unfortunately other birders were not able to relocate the tanager. Although Pine Siskins can linger into the summer months and occasionally breed in Iowa, they are not expected.

Waterfowl weren't seen in large numbers. Two Ring-necked Ducks and a Red-breasted Merganser were the best of 9 species. Raptor numbers were average with 8 species. Warblers provided 23 species and sparrows fourteen.

Additional good birds included: Common Loon, American Bittern, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Broad-winged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Upland, Baird's, White-rumped, and Stilt Sandpipers, Sanderling, Wilson's Phalarope, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Marsh Wren, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-throated, Cerulean, Prothonotary and Kentucky Warblers, Clay-colored, Vesper, Grasshopper, and Harris's Sparrows, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

There weren't many birds missed that I would consider notable—possibly Great Egret, Pileated Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, or Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Thanks everyone, it was another fantastic count!

Participants included: Brady Belcher, Colleen Brems, Mark Brown, Chris Caster, Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Ken Lowder, Cathy Mandarino, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible, Anne Wallis, Ric and Betty Zarwell.

Species Recorded

Canada Goose	93	Bonaparte's Gull	1	Tennessee Warbler	35
Wood Duck	27	Ring-billed Gull	16	Orange-crowned Warbler	3
Gadwall	8	Caspian Tern	1	Nashville Warbler	16
Mallard	60	Forster's Tern	13	Northern Parula	8
Blue-winged Teal	128	Rock Pigeon	36	Yellow Warbler	21
Northern Shoveler	49	Mourning Dove	114	Chestnut-sided Warbler	6
Green-winged Teal	8	Eastern Screech Owl	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	146
Ring-necked Duck	2	Great Horned Owl	3	Black-throated Green Warbler	12
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Barred Owl	6	Blackburnian Warbler	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	25	Whip-poor-will	1	Yellow-throated Warbler	1
Wild Turkey	10	Chimney Swift	2	Palm Warbler	13
Northern Bobwhite	3	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	4	Blackpoll Warbler	5
Common Loon	4	Belted Kingfisher	5	Cerulean Warbler	4
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Red-headed Woodpecker	27	Black-and-white Warbler	20
American White Pelican	63	Red-bellied Woodpecker	35	American Redstart	38
Double-crested Cormorant	171	Downy Woodpecker	29	Prothonotary Warbler	1
American Bittern	1	Hairy Woodpecker	6	Ovenbird	20
Great Blue Heron	38	Northern Flicker	14	Northern Waterthrush	11
Cattle Egret	5	Eastern Wood-Pewee	3	Kentucky Warbler	1
Green Heron	4	Least Flycatcher	4	Common Yellowthroat	16
Black-crowned Night Heron	2	Eastern Phoebe	13	Wilson's Warbler	1
Turkey Vulture	33	Great Crested Flycatcher	14	Summer Tanager	1
Osprey	4	Eastern Kingbird	33	Scarlet Tanager	5
Bald Eagle	1	Loggerhead Shrike	1	Eastern Towhee	7
Cooper's Hawk	2	Yellow-throated Vireo	5	Chipping Sparrow	98
Broad-winged Hawk	2	Blue-headed Vireo	6	Clay-colored Sparrow	6
Red-tailed Hawk	18	Warbling Vireo	29	Field Sparrow	24
American Kestrel	2	Red-eyed Vireo	5	Vesper Sparrow	2
Peregrine Falcon	2	Blue Jay	76	Lark Sparrow	13
Virginia Rail	4	American Crow	53	Savannah Sparrow	8
Sora	8	Horned Lark	12	Grasshopper Sparrow	7
American Coot	32	Purple Martin	2	Song Sparrow	50
Black-bellied Plover	1	Tree Swallow	42	Lincoln's Sparrow	4
American Golden Plover	2	N. Rough-winged Swallow	2	Swamp Sparrow	3
Semipalmated Plover	210	Bank Swallow	2	White-throated Sparrow	80
Killdeer	40	Cliff Swallow	47	Harris's Sparrow	2
Black-necked Stilt	1	Barn Swallow	38	White-crowned Sparrow	123
Greater Yellowlegs	2	Black-capped Chickadee	84	Smith's Longspur	15
Lesser Yellowlegs	100	Tufted Titmouse	11	Northern Cardinal	129
Solitary Sandpiper	12	Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	32
Spotted Sandpiper	20	White-breasted Nuthatch	13	Indigo Bunting	7
Upland Sandpiper	1	Carolina Wren	2	Dickcissel	5
Sanderling	2	House Wren	63	Bobolink	12
Semipalmated Sandpiper	22	Marsh Wren	4	Red-winged Blackbird	381
Least Sandpiper	45	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	17	Eastern Meadowlark	19
White-rumped Sandpiper	3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	43	Western Meadowlark	5
Baird's Sandpiper	59	Eastern Bluebird	11	Yellow-headed Blackbird	3
Pectoral Sandpiper	201	Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	Common Grackle	128
Dunlin	49	Swainson's Thrush	11	Brown-headed Cowbird	55
Stilt Sandpiper	1	Wood Thrush	10	Orchard Oriole	4
Short-billed Dowitcher	5	American Robin	179	Baltimore Oriole	44
Long-billed Dowitcher	20	Gray Catbird	33	House Finch	21
Wilson's Snipe	6	Northern Mockingbird	1	Pine Siskin	10
American Woodcock	5	Brown Thrasher	31	American Goldfinch	70
Wilson's Phalarope	14	European Starling	156	House Sparrow	147
		Blue-winged Warbler	1		
		Golden-winged Warbler	1		

Book Reviews

Rick Hollis

There are now three books for beginning birdwatchers in Iowa on the market, and while all share similarities, there are important differences.

Iowa Birds. Ann Johnson, Jim Bangma and Gregory Kennedy. Lone Pine Publishing, 2005.

This is the book for which I have waited for years, as it is great for real beginners, feeder watchers and youngsters. It is not overwhelming like the big books, but is good. The first author is an Iowan who lives and birds in Iowa most of the year.

There are sections on 145 birds describing identification details, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, similar species and best sites. This is in addition to a large introduction to each species. This book probably has the best species section of all three introductory books.

The illustrations are large glorious paintings by Kennedy showing both sexes, breeding and non-breeding if needed. I know many newcomers gravitate to photos, thinking that somehow they better represent 'reality', but these are quite nice and the fact that representative plumages are shown is very useful.

It has a complete checklist, important because it lets people know what birds to expect to see in Iowa.

The book lists 50 birding locations without comment, a far better selection of birding sites than *Iowa Bird Watching*, but I would prefer a paragraph about each site. This book could do with more references that would point people to places where additional information could be found. This is perhaps the only place where *Iowa Bird Watching* is stronger than this book.

I know the first author, but am sure this has no influence on my opinion of this book.

Iowa Bird Watching: A Year-Round Guide. Bill Thompson, III and the staff of *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Cool Springs Press, 2005.

The first 25 pages are a good summary about birding in Iowa written by an Iowa birder, Diane Porter, who is credited in the text but who really should be credited as a co-author. This section is one of the strengths of the book, although her selection of ten must-see birds puzzles me. There is a list of ten birding sites, each with short paragraphs describing them. I feel this cuts Iowa rather short, as there are many more good places to bird in Iowa.

The remaining 135 pages are part of a cookbook series of state bird watching guides. So far, Thompson has published or has publication dates for books covering 29 states. I suspect he has a set of bird biographies – drop in Baltimore Oriole and Blue Jay, drop out Bullock's Oriole and Steller's Jay, etc., while keeping the rest the same.

There are 100 birds, illustrated by small photos. I do not like field guides using photos, and to make it worse, they illustrate only one bird per species, and do not show sexual or seasonal variation. The text for each species covers habitat and range, food, nesting and incubation.

This book points you to Tom Kent's website, where you can get an Iowa checklist, but one is not present in the book. It does not tell you how many birds are expected beyond the 100 birds in the species account section.

This book wastes space on a good deal of general bird information that I do not feel needs to be in a book of Iowa birding. The last 19 pages are very general and probably remain unchanged from state to state, with the exception of changing some plant suggestions, depending on region.

Thompson is a native Iowan, but he's not lived here for a good while. He is the author of one really excellent book, *Identify Yourself: The 50*

Most Common Birding Identification Challenges.

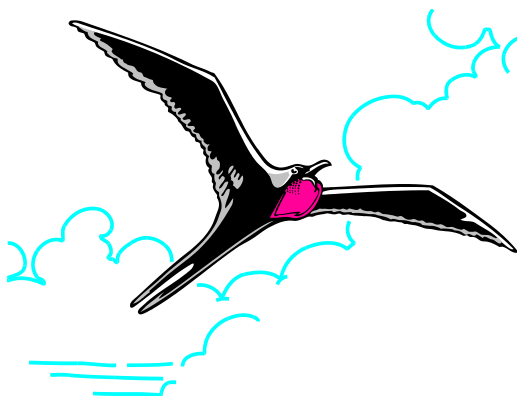
Birds of Iowa Field Guide. Stan Tekiela. Adventure Publications, Inc., 2000.

Stan Tekiela is a Midwesterner who has made a partial career out of writing a series of cookbook field guides like this for different states. So far he has covered birds in 38 states and now is starting on herps and wildflower.

Trusting the author, there are accounts on 112 birds. The species are illustrated by large, good photographs, which show sexual differences but not age differences. If males and females look different, they have different accounts, on different pages, with a great deal of overlapping text. The reason the males and females are listed separately is that birds are arranged by color. I would prefer a book that groups birds by families, as do the other two small field guides to Iowa birds, as well as most field guides. This would give the user a chance to learn about family characteristics, an important identification clue.

The species accounts include size, identification, nest description, incubation, egg description, length of fledgling period and care of fledglings, food, migration, and description of similar species.

There is neither a complete checklist, nor a list of places, although there is a very small reference section that does cite Tom Kent's web site for a checklist.



Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 29, Burlington Area. Chuck Fuller met us at the Port of Burlington and we had a great day, seeing a total of 35 species at several locations in SE Iowa: Dankwardt Park, Green Bay Bottoms, Ft. Madison, Montrose, and the Wever Elevator on the Mississippi River.

Participants: Brady Belcher, Barry Buschelman, Karen Disbrow, Chuck Fuller (leader), Linda Donelson, Barbara Panfil, John Rutenbeck, Dick and Marcia Shaffer.

Birds (35 species): Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Mallard, Canvasback, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Common Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Glaucous Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, European Starling, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur, Northern Cardinal, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– Karen Disbrow

April 21, Meeting. Jim Dinsmore, retired ISU ornithologist and co-author of *Birds in Iowa*, presented on his three-week birding tour of New Zealand in November of 2003. Ross Silcock, a New Zealand native who now lives in Tabor, IA led the trip.

Jim gave us some background on the island nation. It lies fully a thousand miles east of Australia. It is principally made up of two islands, the north being slightly smaller than Iowa and the south being slightly larger. However there are also several hundred smaller islands that dot the surrounding Pacific that are considered part of New Zealand. The Maoris, a people of Polynesian descent, were the primary

inhabitants when Europeans arrived. They currently make up about 15 percent of New Zealand's 4 million people and the nation is bilingual. The principal cities are Auckland and Wellington, both on the North Island. This country lies in the southern hemisphere at latitudes that correspond to those between Duluth and Chattanooga, so Jim covered a lot of territory. Jim reported that he made 13 boat trips, 7 plane trips, and journeyed 3,000 miles by van during his stay. He did find time to eat—we saw the photos.

There are 325 species of birds on the New Zealand list. Sixty-nine of these are endemic and 41 are introduced. Island endemics have shown to be particularly vulnerable to extinction and New Zealand birders have much to be concerned about. No fewer than twenty of the birds seen by Jim on his tour have populations of less than 5,000 individuals. Although the scenery can be breathtaking as snow-capped peaks rise from sea level, New Zealand is about as man-altered as any place on earth. No land mammals are native to New Zealand, but there are many introduced ones including 40-60 million sheep. This has created ecological havoc for the native birdlife. Current conservation efforts focus on using islands to create predator free preserves. The tour visited one of these, the Tiritiri Matangi Sanctuary.

Many of the birds Jim saw are members of bird families we see in Iowa, such as Red-billed Gull, Dotterel (a plover), Brown Teal, Blue Duck, and Australian Grebe. Others were more exotic such as Wandering and Shy Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Fairy Tern, Fjordland Crested Penguin, and of course the Kiwi. Maybe the most interesting bird was a type of parrot called the Kea. People are instructed not to provide handouts to these birds. They have become like the Yellowstone grizzlies, only these birds will use their beaks to dismantle the trim on your vehicle.

Jim also paid a handsome fee to add-on an additional trip. He visited the Chatham Islands about 500 miles to the east of New Zealand.

They turn the clocks ahead 45 minutes of New Zealand time. Pitt Island has the distinction of being the first land mass one would come to after crossing the international date line. In fact a good number of persons desiring to see the first sunrise of the millennia journeyed there in late December 1999. Nearby Mangere Island is known for the Black Robin. This bird must be viewed in the island brush from a boat offshore, as the jagged rocks provide no safe place to land. In 1980 this species was down to just five birds and one breeding pair. There is a memorial to a female Black Robin called "Old Blue" who is the matriarch of the species. Her descendants now number about 250. This is probably one of the most amazing conservation success stories ever.

Thanks Jim for one of the finest presentations we've ever had.

Attendees: Jean and Ed Allgood, Ann Bagford, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Bob Dick, Drew Dillman, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Linda and Roger Fisher, Karole and Jim Fuller, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Paul Kent, Tom Kent, Garrison Klein, Bernie Knight, Dave Kyllingstad, Jim Miller, Connie Mutel, Marsha Nagle, Darlyne and John Neff, Mary Noble, Kari Oeltjen, Anne and Ed Perkins, Diana Pesek, Rosemarie Petzold, Ron Price, Viana Rockel, Suzanne Sarlette, Sharon and Jim Scheib, Marcia and Dick Shaffer, Dick Tetrault.

– *Chris Caster*

April 23, Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge. Inspired by a report of a Fish Crow during the Muscatine CBC, a field trip was scheduled to the Big Timber Division of the Port Louisa NWR. Kelly McKay, who reported the CBC bird, told me that he had seen them there in the past. The three reports of Fish Crow mentioned in *Birds in Iowa* all occurred in Louisa County along the Mississippi floodplain in '91, '94 and '96.

However due to the wind, it was not a good day to bird. Additionally I did not have any recent

experience with the Big Timber Division and it proved difficult to bird. It seems to me that a johnboat tour of the region would be the proper way to search for a Fish Crow. The best we could do was to walk the levy along the water for about a quarter mile. So no Fish Crows, but we did find a very cooperative Lark Sparrow, a number of Yellow-rumped Warblers, and some Hooded Mergansers and a kingfisher on the pond inside the levy.

Finally we wrapped it up with a visit to the Louisa Division and walked the trail from the headquarters down to the water. Both Northern Parula and Yellow-throated Warblers were singing and with patience some of us got looks at both.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Bob and Dara Dick, Linda Donelson, and Linda Rudolph.

Birds (44 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Goldfinch.

– *Chris Caster*

April 30, Otter Creek Marsh. The field trip to Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County was a cold one for the end of April, with temperatures in the low 30s. But the sun was out and there was no wind for awhile. By the time we got out to the pothole area, though, the clouds had come in

and the wind was blowing. Typical for the way the weather has been in late April 2005! Nevertheless, the continued presence of the Red-necked Grebe made us forget all about being chilly. This was a life bird for some on the trip, and certainly a lovely bird to see for all of us. We found it hunkered down with some other waterfowl up against the reeds. Most of the waterfowl were taking shelter from the wind on this cold morning!

The trip started out on a good note as we all saw a Wilson's Snipe close-up as we drove down Q Ave. toward the parking lot at the west end of the dike. Then, as we started the outing, we came across a few shorebirds fairly quickly – Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpipers. We had both yellowlegs in the scope at the same time, providing great contrasting views for those of us who struggle with shorebirds. As we continued on, we saw Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets flying, and American White Pelicans circling overhead.

The element of surprise about whether or not the Red-necked Grebe was still present at the first pothole area was taken out of the equation, though, as we passed two groups of birders leaving the marsh. Of course we asked if the grebe was still there (it had been in the area over a week by this time) and both groups said yes, they had seen it. We were glad to hear this news and approached the pothole area determined to see this grebe for ourselves.

Immediately upon reaching the water we were treated to two of our target birds for the day, the Yellow-headed Blackbirds and the Great-tailed Grackles, both of which perched obligingly for scope views. There were 11 duck species still around, including lovely Ruddy Ducks, a Canvasback and a Redhead. Three Forster's Terns were flying around the area as well. Eventually we did locate the Red-necked Grebe and we enjoyed scoping it for a while. While looking at that bird, a Sandhill Crane flew into the area and landed on the opposite shore, standing right out in the open and providing great looks for all of us.

Later on, we went to the east side of the marsh to look for rails, as we had been told by other birders that they had flushed Soras over in that area earlier that day. We had many Soras calling and we all got scope looks at one very cooperative Sora that was visible in some tall, not-too-dense grass. We got a Virginia Rail to respond to our tape and it came very close but never showed itself. And the highlight was an American Bittern who decided we had come too close and flew off, giving us all good looks at it in flight.

Another interesting, but somewhat gruesome, encounter on the trip was the remains of an American Coot that had been some bird's breakfast that morning, perhaps the meal of the resident pair of Bald Eagles. All that we saw left of the bird on the dike was a pile of feathers and the coot's head. We couldn't help ourselves and we picked up the head and admired it close-up.

Participants: Brady Belcher, John Bollenbacher, Drew Dillman, Vicky Eaton, Therese Guedon, Cathy Mandarino, Diana Pesek (leader), Linda Rudolph, Matt and Rose Wetrich.

Birds: (48 species): Pied-billed Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, House Wren, Marsh Wren, American Robin, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle

– Diana Pesek



May 1, Kent Park and Wilson's Orchard.

The day started out chilly with a stiff breeze, with not much bird activity. We were hoping for many warblers, but they had not arrived yet. The Wilsons welcome birders at their orchard, but request that you call before coming to bird to make sure they are not spraying or have other groups visiting.

Participants: Joe Baker, Phyllis Black, Barry Buschelman, Jim and Rosanna Cook, Karen Disbrow (leader), Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Pat Kieffer, Bernie Knight, Cathy Mandarino, Jim Miller, Jane Omann, Linda Rudolph, Linda Wilmarth, Carol Winter.

Birds at Kent Park (22 species): Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Wild Turkey, Solitary Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird.

Birds at Wilson's Orchard (12 species): Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, American Goldfinch.

– Karen Disbrow

May 19, Meeting. Kelly McKay is a professional ornithological surveyor. He lives in Hampton, IL and monitors bird populations at the request of anyone willing to pay for his services. Many of these studies have been for the US Fish & Wildlife Service at sites along the Mississippi River from St. Louis to Minneapolis, but he has traveled out East for some as well. In addition to working with birds, Kelly also enjoys doing herpetology surveys.

Kelly co-presented with Karen Harvey. Karen is the wildlife biologist employed with the USFWS at the Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge. This 8,373-acre refuge now includes three Mississippi River floodplain units: 1) the Big Timber Division south of Fruitland, IA 2) the Louisa Division east of Wapello, IA and 3) the Keithsburg Division just north of Keithsburg, IL. These units comprise backwater sloughs and bottomland timber. They are managed in an attempt to mimic the natural fluctuations in water level that once occurred along the Mississippi. After the flood of '93 a fourth unit, the Horseshoe Bend Division was added. It is southeast of Wapello along the Iowa River floodplain. It contains some wetlands and timber, but unlike the other refuge units it also contains large areas of grasslands. The Port Louisa NWR is marked on some maps as the Mark Twain NWR. Karen's Headquarters are located along Louisa County Road X61 within the refuge's Louisa Division.

Avian surveys were made of the Port Louisa NWR between '94 and '96, and recent surveys make comparison with the previous data. The flood of '93 had a devastating effect on the bottomland forests. Many trees were lost and large holes were made that allowed for the invasion of shrubby growth. It was thought that this might be detrimental to the bird populations, however it seems to have been very beneficial. Kelly feels that a distinction between "soft" vs. "hard" edge must be made. What occurs at the junction of a forest and a cornfield is a hard edge. According to Kelly these hard edges are always detrimental to birdlife. They don't provide adequate food and

cover and the impact of cowbird parasitism and predation by skunks and raccoons is far greater. What resulted from the flood was what Kelly refers to as soft edge habitat. Soft edges are irregular in shape, usually encompass areas under twenty acres, and contain an abundance of transitional plant types beneficial even to the deep forest birds.

The survey work that Kelly performed was well planned. Nothing like the spurious walk-throughs we have performed on our club outings. Ten points were surveyed in each of the refuge units and each point was sampled 8 times. Kelly would spend 10 minutes furiously recording all species detected by sight or sound within 100 meters of his location. All surveys were made during times of peak avian activity, sunrise to 11 am, but not on excessively rainy or windy days. Spring migration surveys were done from late April to mid-May, but the same surveys were performed during the breeding and fall migration. The data collected gave a measure of the relative abundance of species within the refuge.

Results of Kelly's work indicated that the refuge floodplain forests are a potential source for Red-headed Woodpeckers, a species that has been in sharp decline for many years. Kelly attributes their success to the abundance of dead and dying trees in the both the Big Timber and Keithsburg Divisions. Unfortunately there were not any additional conservation bright spots identified. Though Kelly did feel that the Horseshoe Bend Division might be one of Iowa's best kept birding secrets due to the presence of many grassland species including LeConte's, Nelson's Sharp-tailed, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Henslow's Sparrows have been found there, but not during Kelly's 2004 survey work. Unfortunately Horseshoe Bend is closed to entry from September 15 to November 30 every year.

Kelly also presented on a second survey conducted on Long Island (also part of the Mark Twain NWR Complex) within the Mississippi River between Louis County, MO and Adams

County, IL. And for the benefit of our many West High students, Karen discussed her career with the USFWS.

Incidentally Kelly is also the compiler for six Christmas Bird Counts along the Mississippi from Clinton down to Western Mercer County, IL and I believe he participates in a few others. Kelly is also the Winter Field Reports editor for the Illinois Ornithologists Society. Thanks for the presentation Kelly and keep up the good work.

Attendees: Ed Allgood, Colleen Brems, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Garrison Klein, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Nancy and Richard Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Jim Miller, Anne and Ed Perkins, Jim Scheib, Marcia and Richard Shaffer. West High Students: Kasim Adam, Jen Babcock, Landon Boyer, Cheryl Brooks, Bob Dunkin, Kelly Dunkin, Brandon Hanes, Salil Kalghatgi, Colleen Lawrence, Gabe Martin, Hannah Oren, Daniel Webles, Lin Weeks, Steph Zepeda.

– *Chris Caster*

May 22, South Sycamore Bottoms. After discussion, the six participants opted to dispense with the long road trip to the Dudgeon Area, and to visit the South Sycamore Bottoms south of Iowa City instead. This area had recently been described with good birds cited by Mark Brown, and the group decided to see it first hand. It was a beautiful sunny day with only a breeze early. The highlight was a Least Bittern at close range which seemed oblivious to the group. Forty-one species were spotted, including Sedge Wrens and other grassland birds in the surrounding fields.

Participants: Brady Belcher, Chris Caster, Linda Donelson, Jim Fuller (leader), Karole Fuller, Dave Kyllingstad.

Birds (41 species): Least Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed

Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dickcissel, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Jim Fuller*

May 29, Hanging Rock Woods. A holiday weekend and overcast skies with the threat of rain made birding the Hanging Rock area on the north side of the Hawkeye Wildlife area a bit challenging. Thirty-one species were tallied, most by call as it was difficult to see birds in the dark woods. The big surprise was no singing Kentucky Warblers when five had been heard one day earlier in sunny conditions. The highlight was the discovery of a Yellow-throated Vireo's nest with the singing bird on the nest. A photo was later obtained and submitted to the Iowa City Bird Club website.

Participants: Mike Dooley, Roger and Linda Fisher, Ken Lowder (leader), Pete and Louise Wickham.

Birds (31 species): Turkey Vulture, Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Veery, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue Jay, American Crow, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, American Goldfinch, Tennessee Warbler, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole.

– *Ken Lowder*

May 30, Brinton Timber. Brinton Timber is a 320-acre woodland adjacent to the Skunk River in southwest Washington County, owned by the Washington County Conservation Board. It features six miles of well-maintained trails through mature upland and lowland forest. Brinton Timber has not been visited often by birders. It has been nominated as an Iowa Important Bird Area (IBA), but to date there have not been enough bird records submitted to gain this designation. The primary objective of this trip was to survey the area and find as many species of special concern to the IBA program as possible. Hopefully the results of our surveys in the past two years will be enough to secure IBA status for Brinton Timber.

The trail system at Brinton is setup in six interconnected loops of varying length. We intended to cover only a small portion of the area on our visit, but it was a beautiful morning and we were having such an enjoyable time that we kept hiking until we had covered all the loops, for a total distance of about 5.3 miles. We encountered five target IBA species, and recorded good numbers of several species.

Participants: Chris Caster, Chris Edwards (leader).

Notable Birds: Black-billed Cuckoo 1, Pileated Woodpecker 1, Acadian Flycatcher 20, Alder Flycatcher 1, Wood Thrush 11, Northern Parula 5, Cerulean Warbler 6, Ovenbird 25, Kentucky Warbler 9, Scarlet Tanager 4.

– *Chris Edwards*

June 12, Matsell Bridge Natural Area. Linda Donelson joined me for an exploration of the Matsell Bridge Natural Area, a 1624-acre county park in eastern Linn County. From an internet site, this information was posted about Matsell, which indicates the size of the area: “Matsell Bridge Natural Area provides two trails: The Pine & Prairie Trail - 6.3 miles; Red Oak Trail - 2.1 miles. The surrounding area is hardwoods and open prairies.”

Needless to say, Linda and I did not cover the entire park. We walked the trails for about three hours and I would estimate we covered about 1/4 of the park, on the Pine & Prairie Trail. The trails are extensive and eventually go all the way back to the Wapsipinicon River, but we were not able to make it back that far. The habitat we covered was mostly edge with trees and shrubs on one side and fields on the other, and some small pine tracts. Our purpose for exploring Matsell was to look for IBA birds but in the areas we checked, we didn't find any.

The day was warm and sunny, great for the birds, a little warm for us humans. Birds were well along into their summer mating and nesting season, and the birds we saw were all summer residents. Our favorite bird of the day was definitely the lovely Blue-winged Warbler, who put on a show for us singing and displaying his vibrant yellow color. We saw two Blue-winged Warblers and heard two more. We also heard numerous Ovenbirds, but despite our best efforts to track one down for a look, all but one eluded us, and the one we saw was not willing to give us much of a look at it!

Participants: Linda Donelson, Diana Pesek (leader).

Birds (32 species): Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch.

– *Diana Pesek*

June 18, Indiangrass Hills. Eleven birders visited the Indiangrass Hills prairie restoration in southwest Iowa County on a perfect sunny day and picked up our usual target grassland birds. Sticking to the eastern property, we had hardly entered when a Sedge Wren presented itself for good open looks right alongside the trail. Before long we had our first look at a Henslow's Sparrow. This one set a pattern repeated a few more times, a bird perched nicely up on a small forb, close at hand and singing unperturbed for several minutes. We all had plenty of sustained views through the scope at this sparrow and others by the time we were done. Meanwhile, Bobolinks were ubiquitous, with more than a dozen over the course of our walk.

Descending down into the savannah-like habitat along the creek, we discovered a recently fledged Baltimore Oriole in a shrub on the edge of the trail. The short-tailed young bird was relatively unwary, and before long the mother came in and fed it, which we all enjoyed watching. At the same time we were hearing an Orchard Oriole sing, but it wasn't until farther down the trail that the bird and its apparent mate finally made their appearance. We spotted another male Orchard Oriole toward the south end of the creek trail.

It was along here that we met up with Judy Felder and Sandy Rhodes, two of the property's owners, who had come down to do preliminary work prior to a round of tractor mowing for invasive plants (nothing that would disturb nesting bird habitat, it should be noted). We had several in our party who were very interested in the various issues of prairie restoration and maintenance, and the rest of us moved on as they stayed behind for an impromptu Q & A session with the two owners.

As usual, the trip leader failed to find the one spot where the creek can be comfortably crossed to head back, and thus ensued the annual ritual of helping people ease down the bank and leap across the water. From there, in the southeast corner of the property, we climbed the meadow

rise and had our only good look at a Grasshopper Sparrow, which followed the lead of the earlier Henslow's Sparrows and set itself up nicely for scope viewing.

After our walk, the group piled into a couple of SUVs and drove down the trail to where Sandy and Judy were working. There we conducted an informal ceremony, presenting the official Important Bird Area sign for Indiangrass Hills. It was very gratifying to acknowledge the excellent work that the owners, including Mary Brown, who was absent this particular day, have done in maintaining the rich grassland bird habitat at this prairie site.

Our birding at Indiangrass was not quite over. Judy and Sandy had told us about a Northern Mockingbird they had seen earlier near the northwest corner of the eastern property, along I Ave. toward 250th. Driving slowly along I Ave., we relocated the bird briefly as it flew across the road and onto a shrub. It stayed perched there for a short while, but not long enough for all of our remaining few people to get a look. We plunged into the grasses and climbed up to one of the ridges but never did see or hear the mockingbird again, although we had one more each of Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrow, and a male Bobolink as well.

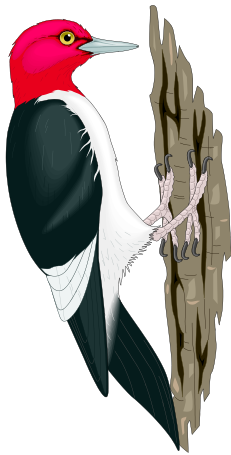
After the official outing, three of us headed for southeast Johnson County to take a look at the fine martin houses on a Mennonite farmstead there. We were well rewarded as the houses were quite busy with Purple Martins, including a few young birds who were ensconced with perpetually open bills pointing out through their entrance holes.

Participants: Drew and Judy Dillman, Linda and John Donelson, Mike Dooley (leader), Tony Franken, Candace Haveley, Garrison Klein, Ken Lowder, Diana Pesek, Sandra Sutherlin.

Birds (43 species): Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe,

Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– Mike Dooley



June 25, Wildcat Den State Park. This state park has been nominated as an Iowa Audubon Important Bird Area, but has not yet received full acceptance. The park is located just off Hwy. 61 in Muscatine County, between Muscatine and Davenport. It is notable for its scenic bluffs, rock outcroppings and rocky gorges.

The current Americorps Volunteer met us at the park headquarters. She was an environmental study major who hoped to learn more about the local bird life so that she could provide more varied programs for the campers. This worked out well as it was my first time at the park and she already knew the trails.

Although the trip was scheduled in order to discover IBA birds we spent a good bit of time identifying the local plants, admiring the large rock formations and discussing nature and the

history of the park. I learned from Alan that the rusty looking areas around the springs were not from rusting water pipes, but from iron-fixing bacteria. I learned from Therese where to look for a fish carved in the rocks of the streambed. We did find a few birds for the IBA effort. Some of us got to see a Pileated Woodpecker and all of us got treated to a singing Cerulean Warbler. I most enjoyed the cool walk down the gorge with all the Northern Rough-winged Swallows flying about. Nice place!

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Therese Guedon, Alan Nagel, and Suzanne Sarlette

Notable Birds: Pileated Woodpecker 1, Acadian Flycatcher 2, Carolina Wren 2, Wood Thrush 1, Northern Parula 2, Louisiana Waterthrush 3, Scarlet Tanager 2.

– Chris Caster

July 2, Toolesboro Access. The Toolesboro Access is simply a boat access along the Mississippi backwaters that form the Lake Odessa WMA in Louisa County. It is at the end of a short gravel road that begins at the village of Toolesboro along Hwy. 99 east of Wapello. It has been accepted as an Iowa Audubon Important Bird Area.

We parked near the boat access. Birding this area consisted of walking the access road, which borders the ponds inside the levy. All five of the Prothonotary Warblers found were somewhere along this road. Both Wood Thrushes were heard along this road as well. The ponds were also nice places to view Belted Kingfisher, Tree Swallows, and Red-headed Woodpeckers. We circled back to the car by walking the levy. There we found a singing Northern Parula and a fairly cooperative Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Since it didn't take long to bird the Toolesboro Access, we decided to head over to visit the Horseshoe Bend Division of the Port Louisa NWR. We walked out just far enough to view the Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets that were foraging in the ponds. And a gorgeous

singing Common Yellowthroat was nice to observe for a few moments.

For lunch we visited a Mexican place in Wapello. Come to think of it I still owe Diana some money. It was fun, because everyone knew some Spanish—actually Theresa is fluent. And I got to learn a lot about kids, education, and coprolites—ask John about these.

We finished up with about a half-hour stop at Cairo Woods on our return to Iowa City. This was just long enough to find a singing Wood Thrush and Kentucky Warbler. And it was getting plenty hot by then. I think I slept most of the way back.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Therese Guedon, John McLure, Diana Pesek

Notable Toolesboro Birds: Wood Thrush 2, Northern Parula 2, Prothonotary Warbler 5.

Notable Cairo Woods Birds: Wood Thrush 1, Kentucky Warbler 1.

– *Chris Caster*

July 16, Butterfly Count. This was our seventh annual butterfly count. As is often the case in mid-July, it was sunny, hot and humid, with a high of 96F. We visited Kent Park, Macbride-Nature Recreation Area, Lake Macbride State Park, and Hawkeye Wildlife Area, concentrating our efforts on prairie remnants and other open areas with abundant nectar sources. On the day we tallied 29 species and 563 individuals, which is slightly below our count average of 33 species and 711 individuals.

Our count was held in conjunction with the North American Butterfly Association's 4th of July Butterfly Count program. More than 400

counts are held annually throughout North America. Count results provide information about the distribution and relative population sizes of butterflies. Comparisons across years can be used to monitor changes in populations and study the effects of weather and habitat change on butterflies. We use the same 15-mile diameter count circle that is used for the Christmas Bird Count.

Participants: Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards (leader), Gail McLure, John McLure.

Butterflies (29 species, 583 individuals): Black Swallowtail 2, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 7, Cabbage White 178, Clouded Sulphur 132, Orange Sulphur 31, Cloudless Sulphur 1, Little Yellow 1, Bronze Copper 7, Coral Hairstreak 2, Eastern Tailed-Blue 14, 'Summer' Spring Azure 96, American Snout 1, Great Spangled Fritillary 16, Meadow Fritillary 10, Pearl Crescent 3, Question Mark 1, Gray Comma 1, Mourning Cloak 1, Painted Lady 9, Red Admiral 11, Red-spotted Purple 2, Viceroy 11, Common Wood-Nymph 10, Monarch 13, Silver-spotted Skipper 3, Least Skipper 12, Peck's Skipper 4, Byssus Skipper 1, Black Dash 3.

– *Chris Edwards*

July 22, Moth Watch at Squaw Creek Park. Jim Durbin has a great set-up for lighting white sheets on a stand that attracts the moths. We were able to observe many species as they sat there, some for the entire 2 ½ hours we were there. Next year we will set up somewhere near Iowa City so more people can attend.

Participants: Karen Disbrow, Therese Guedon, Mary Noble.

– *Karen Disbrow*

Johnson County Birding Highlights, Spring & Summer 2005

Mike Dooley

MARCH

The first bird of note posted for the county during the spring season was a GREATER SCAUP at Swan Lake on March 9th, which stayed for a week. Also on the 9th, 200 GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE were at Round Pond, and in all 16 duck species were seen for the day. Various points at Coralville Reservoir turned up over 7,000 gulls on March 12th, including a juvenile GLAUCOUS GULL at Sandy Beach which was relocated the next day. Also off Sandy Beach were 14 more GREATER SCAUP. Along James Ave. in Hawkeye W.A., five EURASIAN TREE SPARROWS were present on March 16th.

APRIL

It was apparently slow birding for the remainder of March, and the next real highlight came on the first day of April, a flock of 10 BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS identified in a corn stubble field in the extreme southeast corner of the county. Another 21 Brewer's would be found in the same general area two weeks later. An outing on April 3rd turned up more good birds down in the southeast corner, including a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD. A week later, on the 10th, an IBIS SPECIES was a good distance out on the extensive flats and shallows of the upper Coralville Reservoir, scoped from off James Ave. The bird was relocated later that day, but continued to keep its exact identity secret, finally lifting and disappearing off to the north. Shorebirds off James Ave. included 228 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS. That same day, just down the shore at Babcock Access, 30 SMITH'S LONGSPURS were identified in the grass near the parking area, with up to 40 found through April 15th and at least a few remaining to a record late date of May 8th.

Johnson County's first warbler report for the spring was a potential state record second-earliest NORTHERN PARULA, seen behind an apartment complex near Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City on April 11th. Meanwhile the traditional YELLOW-THROATED WARBLERS appeared on schedule at the Cottage Reserve area off Lake Macbride, on the 14th. The next day a couple of more YELLOW-THROATED WARBLERS were found at Sugar Bottom R.A., along with three RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES. Also on the 15th, Twin View Heights hosted four DUNLINS, the state's first report for the season.

A few days later, on April 19th, a SNOWY EGRET was at the small wetland off 200th St. near Lake Macbride's south arm, while a first-alternate THAYER'S GULL, an unusual plumage for Iowa, was at the Twin View Heights inlet on the reservoir. The following day, April 20th, was a productive day around the lake and reservoir, starting with 14 CATTLE EGRETS at Sandy Beach. A WARBLING VIREO near Opie Ave. at Lake Macbride was one of two first reports for the state that day, and a potential record third-earliest. A full record-earliest bird was an ORCHARD ORIOLE along Amana Rd. at the upper reservoir, and a WILSON'S PHALAROPE out on the spits was Iowa's first for the season. On April 26th, over a dozen SANDHILL CRANES were a surprise flyover in Iowa City. The next day, an AMERICAN BITTERN was at the small pond off the Sand Point parking lot and remained at least until the Spring Count on May 7th. Five MARBLED GODWITS were seen at Sandy Beach and Twin View Heights on the lower reservoir, the godwits sticking around for an extra day. April 28th found six EARED GREBES and a WILLET in the same area, this latter bird apparently unaware that 20 more of his family were gathered off Sand Point.

MAY

A solid week of vexing cold temperatures and high north winds seemed to put the songbird migrations on hold, and few passerines were reported. On May 5th, a SCARLET TANAGER and a BLUE-WINGED WARBLER in Hickory Hill Park broke the spell somewhat. The state's first report of GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH came the following day from Swan Lake Woods, while across the road a BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON was observed on the shore of the lake itself.

The annual Johnson County Spring Count took place on Saturday, May 7th and netted 167 species. The stars of the show were a BLACK-NECKED STILT and a remnant 14 SMITH'S LONGSPURS at Babcock Access. A female SUMMER TANAGER was found on the Hanging Rock Woods trail in the northwest section of Hawkeye W.A.

The day following the Spring Count produced a WHITE-EYED VIREO at Frytown Conservation Area southwest of Iowa City, and on the 9th GOLDEN-WINGED and KENTUCKY WARBLERS were the highlights at Hickory Hill Park. Another GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER was along the Clear Creek Nature Trail on the 10th. In Iowa City, also on the 10th, a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD was found at City Park. That evening, a population of shorebirds on the upper Coralville Reservoir was conservatively estimated from the Amana Road side at upwards of 8,000 birds. Highlights included the relocation of the BLACK-NECKED STILT along with BLACK-BELLIED and AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, HUDSONIAN GODWIT, SANDERLING, and over 80 WILSON'S PHALAROPES. This would prove to be the last major shorebird activity reported, since the water levels soon grew to obliterate any productive flats. Meanwhile, two bonus passerines near the Amana Road overlook were YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER and YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.

An outing on May 13th to points around Lake Macbride flushed a LEAST BITTERN along the Opie Avenue trail on the north shore of the north arm, despite the rather high waters. Two BELL'S VIREOS were found while walking the loop trail near the boat storage on the south shore, just up the road from Cottage Reserve. Two more GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS at Hickory Hill Park were added to the county's spring list for that species and yet another was at the Clear Creek trail the following day, along with the county's first report of CAPE MAY WARBLER. Hickory Hill's run on GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS continued unabated with four birds on May 15th, while another CAPE MAY WARBLER was at Oakland Cemetery, part of an eventual 21 warbler species for the day in these two locations. Two VEERIES and a surprising five SCARLET TANAGERS were also in the southern section of Hickory Hill, but the headliner was a rare WESTERN TANAGER found at mid morning and relocated numerous times into the afternoon. Meanwhile, the answer to Johnson County's lack of good stable marsh habitat may lie in extreme southeast Iowa City. On May 16th, two adjacent marshes, created by the city and collectively named South Sycamore Bottoms, produced an AMERICAN BITTERN, three LEAST BITTERNS, seven BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, and two YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS.

It wouldn't be a Hickory Hill Park spring without CONNECTICUT WARBLER, and the lone report came on May 20th, heard in the north canyon. An Iowa City Bird Club outing to Frytown Conservation and Red Bird Farm the next day, however, was surprisingly sparse considering the date. Singles of BELL'S VIREO and BLUE-WINGED WARBLER were the highlights, both at Frytown. May 23rd brought a rare Johnson County visit from a WESTERN KINGBIRD, spotted along a country road south of Hawkeye W.A., and the next day another CONNECTICUT WARBLER was an outstanding yard bird at a home just north outside of Iowa City. Warbler reports in general, however, slowed down considerably during the final third of the month, and the best sighting in Hickory Hill Park on the 26th was of three BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS. At the opposite end of town, two LEAST BITTERNS were

still present at South Sycamore Bottoms on the 28th. A trip that same day to Hanging Rock Woods off Amana Rd. in Hawkeye W.A. turned up no less than five KENTUCKY WARBLERS, and on the 29th at Hanging Rock, during a Bird Club outing, a YELLOW-THROATED VIREO was observed singing on its nest. Two VEERIES were also calling in the woods, closing out the spring highlights for the county.

JUNE

A June 2nd visit to Sycamore Bottoms in southeast Iowa City opened up the summer season with a LEAST BITTERN and a lingering GREATER YELLOWLEGS. More than a week later, on the 11th, a few bird club members surveyed an obscure section of woods at the lower reservoir, around the radar dish near the Mahaffey Bridge, for the Army Corps of Engineers. The best finds were ACADIAN FLYCATCHER, two YELLOW-THROATED WARBLERS, and a LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH. The Yellow-throateds were relocated on the 17th. Also on the 17th, two CERULEAN WARBLERS were singing at their familiar campground location in Macbride Nature Recreation Area, and a PILEATED WOODPECKER was in the area as well. On the 26th another bird club survey for the Corps, this time in the area of Hoosier Creek north of Sandy Beach/Twin View Heights, turned up one each of BELL'S VIREO and HENSLOW'S SPARROW, the latter not easy to come by in Johnson County. Notable too were an estimated 50 BOBOLINKS, a very high count during the breeding season.

JULY

The first report of any consequence in the county during a very hot and dry July, and almost the only report to that point at all, was of three SANDHILL CRANES at Sycamore Bottoms on the 19th. A HENSLOW'S SPARROW was singing at the bottoms a few days later on the 24th. The first shorebird reports livened things up as the season came down to its final few days. On the 26th, two each of AMERICAN AVOCET and WILLET were seen off Sand Point on the reservoir, with the first SEMIPALMATED PLOVER making an appearance as well. The next day the avocet population rose dramatically to a hefty seventeen birds. The summer closed with discoveries of single BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS on the 31st at both Sand Point and the Nauman Sod Farm south of Iowa City. Also at the sod farm was an UPLAND SANDPIPER.

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 for 2005 are \$10, and for 2006 are \$15 per household and \$10 for students. Members receive a 10% discount on bird seed at Bird's Eye View in Coralville.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Check here for e-mail subscription only

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 \$15 per household or \$10 for students, 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 or cjcaster@earthlink.net.

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

Chris Edwards, Editor
85 Whitman Avenue
North Liberty, IA 52317

