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# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 3

December 2005

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## 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, Thursday, 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 18, 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](mailto: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 Mondo's Tomato Pie in Coralville.

**January 8, Sunday, 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. Bird Feeder Watch Social** hosted by Ken and Mary Lowder, 4364 Tree Farm Lane. Come for coffee and rolls and watch the winter birds visiting the Lowders' feeders. For directions call Ken at 351-1207.

**January 29, Sunday, 1:30 p.m. Owl Prowl.** We'll spend the afternoon searching for roosting owls, such as Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, and Barred Owls. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

**February 4, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Amana Turkey Walk and Feast.** Join us for an early morning hike through the woods followed by breakfast at the Amanas. Please call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 if you plan to attend.

**February 16, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Jim Scheib will present the Story of Crex Meadows, Wisconsin Home to Sharp-tailed Grouse. This is a preview of the IOU fieldtrip he will be leading to Crex on April 29-30.

**February 19, Sunday, 8 a.m. Mississippi River and Quad Cities** for gulls, eagles, and waterfowl. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

Continued on next page →

## Schedule – continued

**March 4, 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.

**March 12, 7:30 a.m. Cone Marsh** in Louisa County for ducks, geese, and other early spring arrivals. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

**March 21, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Beginning Birdwatcher Course** at the Conservation Education Center at Kent Park. This is the first of six classes which are free to club members. See page 17 for a complete schedule.

**March 23, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Kent Nickell will present on his weeklong stay at the famous Chan Chich Lodge in Belize during March of 2005.

**March 25, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Cone Marsh.** *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**April 1, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area.** *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

**April 8, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Kent Park.** *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

## Other Dates of Note

**February 3, Friday, 1:30 p.m. Birding Iceland.** Jim Scheib will repeat his popular program on Iceland at the Iowa City Senior Center.

**March 7, Tuesday. Annual Prairie Preview** at Montgomery Hall at the Johnson County Fairgrounds. This year's program will honor the conservation efforts of the late Sandy Rhodes, specifically his work to preserve Indiangrass Hills.

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### Renewal Notice

If you haven't already done so, it is time to renew your membership for 2006. Effective with the new year, our annual membership dues are \$15, or \$10 for students. Your mailing label indicates the most recent year for which you have paid, next to your name. 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 St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Your dues are used to pay for the expenses of publishing and mailing our club newsletter, operating our web site, reimbursing speakers for travel costs, and printing fliers to distribute throughout the community to promote our activities. As an added bonus, members receive a 10% discount on bird seed at Bird's Eye View in Coralville.

## **Birding the Mississippi River Near Davenport**

### **Mike Dooley**

Just an hour from Iowa City you can have a nice outing for winter gulls and waterfowl at Locks and Dams 14 and 15 at Le Claire and Davenport, along with a few intervening points along the Mississippi River. The two L&Ds are only about ten miles apart. A few less obvious river viewing points are described in the article, but if you want to keep things simple, you can go a long way by sticking to the public areas at the dams themselves. These are very user friendly and in the right conditions will give you plenty of gulls and waterfowl to work with.

**Lock and Dam 15, downtown Davenport, Iowa** – The main street paralleling the river in Davenport is River St., which doubles as U.S. 61 and 67. Parking for the lock and dam is off River St. at Perry St., which has a traffic light and is just upriver from the Rhythm City Casino. At Perry St., enter the parking drive to the Dock Restaurant and turn left directly in front of the restaurant. Continue to the small lock and dam parking lot on the restaurant's upriver side. Scoping is from the walk in front of the parking lot; there is no public park as such for this lock and dam. The viewing here, however, is close and unobstructed. Gull populations fluctuate daily on a rather unpredictable basis, but on an active day Thayer's Gull verges on predictable, Glaucous Gull is occasional, and a few possible Iceland Gulls (a sometimes controversial identification) have been reported over the years. Besides the gulls, the trees across the river often hold large populations of roosting Bald Eagles, and a few eagles are usually working the spillway as well.

**Pool 15 – Mississippi River Visitor's Center on Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois** – Depending on the state of the river, there are frequently gulls roosting on the ice above the dam at L&D 15 which are not visible from the Davenport parking area. Such gulls, if present, can be viewed from the Mississippi River Visitor's Center on the Illinois side. From the L&D 15 parking area continue upriver a few blocks on River St. to the Government Bridge at 2nd St., which will take you to Rock Island Arsenal. Upon reaching the Illinois side, turn upriver on Rodman Ave. toward the Visitor's Center, for which there will be signs. When first entering Rock Island Arsenal you will need to drive through security at the Davenport Gate, an uncomplicated and routine procedure. It is a good idea to inform the guard that you will be birding with a spotting scope. Continue on to the Visitor's Center on your left. When the river is frozen, there are often gulls roosting on the ice in a large inlet formed between the lock wall and the shore, as well as a little farther upriver, viewable either from within the Visitor's Center, which has a nice balcony lookout, or by walking downriver outside the center.

**Along the River in Bettendorf, Iowa** – Returning into Davenport from Rock Island Arsenal, drive upriver along River Dr./U.S. 67 into Bettendorf, which adjoins Davenport. A little more than 2.5 miles upriver from the Government Bridge, just past 8th St. and on your right, is a Phillips 66 gas station-convenience store. Left of the station's parking lot can be a good place from which to look for gulls out on the ice, and one year this was where two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found. If the water is open, there are usually a few lonesome diving ducks hanging about. You might want to put a little gas in the car or buy a cup of coffee rather than simply borrow the store's parking lot. If something looks interesting upriver from here, continue along U.S. 67 a short way to 13th St., just before the I-74 bridge, and turn into Leach Park, a riverfront park. You'll have to do a little walking from the parking lot to do your scoping.

**Ben Butterworth Parkway, Moline, Illinois** – For another stint of scoping the river from the Illinois side, cross over into Moline on the I-74 bridge, which is just past Leach Park. Take the first exit, River Dr., at the end of the bridge, and at the bottom of the ramp turn upriver (right). Very soon you come to Ben Butterworth Parkway, a thin strip of recreational park running about 1.5 miles along the river. There are occasional parking areas along the parkway. The state's fourth-ever record of Harlequin Duck was recently sighted from Ben Butterworth and, depending on ice conditions, there can be gatherings of gulls here and there. Once finished with Ben Butterworth, return downriver to I-74 and cross back into Bettendorf to head for Lock and Dam 14.

**Lock and Dam 14 and Pool 14, Le Claire, Iowa** – This dam and its pool are productive for gulls and diving ducks respectively, both groups very easily viewed. A few Thayer's Gulls are a given each year, and Glaucous Gull is frequent as well. Both Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Iceland Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake have been found here recently as well. Greater Scaup and any of the three scoter species are occasionally found above the dam. In addition there is a river drive a little farther upriver from the dam, a mile and a half in length, which invariably offers plenty of divers to sort through (directions below).

Begin with the Army Corps of Engineers park off of U.S. 67. Its entrance, on the Iowa side of the river, is about seven miles upriver from I-74 in Bettendorf, or two miles downriver from I-80, and has a prominent sign. After parking, walk toward the public area and immediately note the gulls working the narrow artificial channel along the way, close enough to identify almost by naked eye. Be sure to peer down into the farther section of the channel, which is like a large cistern, where there are sometimes numerous gulls roosting on the water. Once into the actual park, start by scanning the backwater/lagoon away from the dam and closer to the highway, to the left of the L&D office building. This is often a popular roosting spot for gulls, and hosted a Great Black-backed Gull in 2004. From here you can head over to the dam itself and scope its consistently large airborne population. To view waterfowl immediately above the dam, see Fisherman's Corner below.

**Canal Shore Dr.** – Return to U.S. 67 and continue upriver about one half mile past I-80 to the intersection at Eagle Ridge Rd., which has a traffic light. Turn right on Eagle Ridge and arrive quickly at a T-intersection with Canal Shore Dr. Canal Shore fronts the river and for virtually its entire length affords unobstructed viewing of Pool 14, with easy parking almost anywhere you care to (all in front of riverfront homes, so be considerate in situating yourself). Moderate duck rafts string out all along the river here. Common Goldeneyes predominate, as is usual for the Mississippi in winter, but other diving ducks make their appearances here and there as well. Due to recent changes in the road, there is a short section of Canal Shore Dr. extending upriver from the intersection with Eagle Ridge, but most of the drive is downriver. All told, the drive extends for a little more than a mile and a half, and scoping ends when you reach the marina. However, it is worth parking in the vicinity of the marina (but still along the road) and scoping out toward L&D 14. You'll be viewing a section of the pool fairly close to the dam, and there can be large concentrations of ducks out there.

**Fisherman's Corner South R.A.** – After the marina, Canal Shore Dr. will emerge again onto U.S. 67. From here, drive a short distance back upriver to I-80 (which you passed under while driving Canal Shore), and cross the river into Illinois. Immediately over the bridge, take the Illinois Hwy. 84 exit, and at the stop sign, turn left, downriver. 1.5 miles from here, look for Fisherman's Corner South R.A. (not North R.A., which you pass first), on your right. This, too, is an Army Corps of Engineers park. Park in the lot and walk out the pier, right up to the dam, for excellent scoping of ducks immediately above the dam. Be assured that this is a legitimate public walk. The gate at the beginning of the pier is meant to block vehicles, not pedestrians, and there's space to walk by the gate. Further, once at the dam, you can

also walk around the end of the dam on its spillway side a short way, and pick your way down the embankment (not difficult) to a flat spot to set up for scoping the gulls. Again, this area is open to fishing, as the trash can and the sign prohibiting the cleaning of fish will attest, so do not worry that you are venturing where you shouldn't be.

## My Ten Favorite Birding Books

Chris Edwards

Reading and birding are two of my favorite activities. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that I love books about birds. My bookshelves are overflowing with bird books – from field guides and bird-finding guides to natural histories and coffee table books. Recently, as I was staring at my bookcase and looking for a nook or cranny in which to fit yet another book about hawk identification, I had this thought – out of all those books, which ones were my all-time favorites? If I had to choose just a few, which books couldn't I live without? Which would I recommend to my birding friends? I thought it would be fun to make a list of my top ten. So what follows is a list of my favorite birding books – the books that I think should be on every Iowa birder's bookshelf. If you have your own list, send it in, and I'll try to publish it in a future newsletter.

***The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* by David Allen Sibley.** Of course your most important bird book is your favorite field guide. Ten years ago choosing a field guide was a fairly simple choice: Peterson's *Eastern Birds* or National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Today there are many excellent field guides available. The Sibley Eastern guide is my favorite, because it packs the most information into a pocket-sized binding. At home, I refer often to the full-size *Sibley Guide to Birds*. The latest edition of the National Geographic guide is still an excellent choice, and is the favorite of many birders. Kenn Kaufman's *Birds of North America* is an excellent beginner's guide which uses digitally-manipulated photographs. And Roger Tory Peterson's venerable classic is still a worthy guide for beginners, although I rarely see it in the field anymore.

***Birds in Iowa* by Thomas H. Kent and James J. Dinsmore.** This book is indispensable to the serious student of Iowa birdlife. Beginning birders often struggle to learn which birds occur in Iowa, and when and where they can be found. *Birds in Iowa* answers these questions and many more. It describes the seasonal and geographic frequency and distribution of bird species that have been recorded in Iowa, including nesting status. It includes charts which show the relative frequency by month along with early and late dates for each species, and maps of county locations for selected species. The book covers all records of Iowa birds through 1995, and updates through 2003 are provided on Tom Kent's web site at <http://home.mchsi.com/~thkbirds/>. A copy of *Birds in Iowa* is provided free to all new members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. Copies may also be ordered directly from Tom for \$5.00 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling at 624 Larch Lane, Iowa City IA, 52245, although you should expect a delay if ordering during the winter months.

***Iowa Sportsman's Atlas* by the Sportsman's Atlas Company.** If you plan to travel further afield than your own backyard or a local city park in search of birds, this atlas is a goldmine of useful information. It features road maps of all 99 Iowa counties, one per page, in a durable spiral binding. All public lands are highlighted and labeled in red, and are accompanied by descriptive listings which include the amenities, acreage, ownership, and other details for each area. Need directions to Brinton Timber or Wickiup Hill Natural Area? Want to discover the next birding hotspot? The journey starts here.

***Eastern/Central Birding by Ear: A Guide to Bird-song Identification* by Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson.** Okay, technically it's not a book, but since this set of audio recordings is accompanied by a detailed booklet, I snuck it onto the list anyway. This set of three compact discs or cassettes is a remarkable tool for learning to identify birds by their songs and calls. It covers 85 of the most commonly encountered species in eastern North America, arranged into learning groups such as "whistlers," "chippers and trillers," "name-sayers," and "mimics". Once you have mastered all the species here, you can move on to the companion volume, *More Birding by Ear*, which features additional warblers, shorebirds, sparrows, marsh birds and others.

***The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, illustrated by David Allen Sibley.** This book is divided into two parts. Part I is like a concise, accessible ornithology textbook. It provides an overview of bird biology, with chapters on flight, form, and function; evolution and taxonomy; behavior; habitats and distribution; and populations and conservation. Part II covers all the bird families in North America, with the same standardized outline for each: taxonomy; variation; molts and plumages; habitats; food and foraging, breeding; movements; conservation and management; accidental species; and escapes. This family-based approach is broader than most other life history books, but there are hundreds of individual species examples. If for no other reason, you should buy this book for Sibley's paintings, which number nearly a thousand. Unlike in field guide illustrations, most of these birds are shown *doing* something: a Vermilion Flycatcher in aerial courtship display; an Acorn Woodpecker storing acorns in a granary tree; a juvenile Great Horned Owl in threat display; American White Pelicans foraging in a group; and so on. Combined with the text, it's a great package.

***Sibley's Birding Basics* by David Allen Sibley.** There is more useful information packed into this slim paperback than in most books twice its size. Despite the title, it has much to offer to both novice and expert birders. The focus is on learning to identify birds: how to look at a bird and interpret the fine details. How to watch patterns, follow sounds, stay attuned to behavior, keep records, understand field marks, and judge relative proportions and average differences. There are great lessons and examples on misidentification, size illusion, and color perception. A large proportion of the book is devoted to feathers, feather tracts, and other structural details of birds, including chapters on molt and feather wear. I think almost every birder could learn something from this book.

***Life Histories of North American Birds* by Arthur Cleveland Bent.** This monumental twenty-volume work was published by the United States National Museum between 1919 and 1968. Dover Publishing later released a complete set of paperback reprints in 26 volumes. Most of these editions are long out-of-print, but nice copies are often available in used book stores or on the Internet. Each book contains detailed species accounts for one or more family groups of birds, describing the nesting habits, eggs, young, plumage and field marks, food, range, behavior, voice, enemies, winter habits, distribution, courtship, molting, and migratory activities of each species. Interesting anecdotes are drawn from many of Bent's contemporaries as well as earlier naturalists such as Audubon, Burroughs, Brewster, Wilson, and Nuttall. These anecdotes, rarely found in today's modern life histories, give the accounts a special flavor and charm that makes them fun to read. Often after I've seen an interesting bird, I pull out Bent's life history to see what he has to say about the species. Only then do I really feel like I've gotten to "know" the bird.

***Wild America* by Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher.** In 1953, Roger Tory Peterson and his British friend James Fisher, who had never been to America, set out on an epic journey to view the birds, wildlife, and other natural wonders of North America. They began their trip in Newfoundland, traveled south to Florida, along the Gulf Coast to Texas, south of the border into Mexico, to the desert Southwest, up the Pacific Coast, and finally to Alaska. By the end of their 30,000-mile journey, they

had seen more species of birds in North America in one year than anyone ever had previously. It's a fascinating and exciting story, and is beautifully illustrated by Peterson. I'm looking forward to reading Scott Weidensaul's new "sequel", *Return to Wild America: A Yearlong Search for the Continent's Natural Soul*.

***How Birds Migrate* by Paul Kerlinger.** Migration is one of the most fascinating aspects of bird behavior, and this is an excellent introduction to the topic. Kerlinger draws heavily from recent scientific research and presents it in a very readable and informative style. Topics include seasonal timing, diurnal and nocturnal migration, migratory rest stops, navigation, flight speed and distance, weather and geographical barriers, and flocking behavior. Dozens of case studies and black-and-white illustrations help explain the concepts. For another great read on this subject, check out Scott Weidensaul's *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*.

***The Bird Watcher's Anthology* by Roger Tory Peterson.** Peterson edited this hefty volume of great literature about bird watching. It collects the writings of such noted naturalists and ornithologists as John Burroughs, Sigurd Olson, Edwin Way Teale, John James Audubon, Frank Chapman, Alexander Skutch, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, Alexander Wilson, and many others. There are 85 selections in all, divided into seven sections: "The Spark," "The Lure of the List," "Migration," "Glamour Birds," "Birds in Far Places," "There Is Often Adventure," and "The Full-Fledged Watcher," which follow the progression of the birdwatcher from novice to seasoned observer. To complete the package, Peterson's brief introductions and superb black-and-white illustrations complement the selections nicely. It's fun to pick up this book on a snowy day and read a few chapters. You can join Ludlow Griscom on a Big Day in New York; witness the immense flocks of Passenger Pigeons in Audubon's day; study oropendalas in the tropics with Alexander Skutch; visit a flamingo nesting colony with Frank Chapman; or experience many other great birding adventures.

## **Hawk Identification Workshop: *Buteos* and *Accipiters***

**Chris Caster**

*Buteos* are medium to large raptors that inhabit either forested or open country. They are often seen soaring or perched conspicuously. Their prey consists largely of rodents or small reptiles and amphibians. The Swainson's Hawk is also well known for eating insects. Most of these raptors are highly variable in plumage, exhibiting many races or subspecies and color phases. Here is a run-down, brief considering the scope of the material.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** Widespread and extremely successful. The first hawk described was from a specimen taken in Jamaica. The Eastern subspecies breeds and predominates in Iowa. It is variable in the amount of dark it has on its bellyband and white mottling on its scapulars. The Krider's Red-tail is considered a pale form of the Eastern subspecies. It breeds on the northern plains and is primarily seen in Iowa during the winter months. The adults are very pale underneath, have lots of white on the head and have a tail that is whitish tinged with red. The Harlan's subspecies until 1973 was considered a separate species. It breeds in British Columbia and Alaska and migrates to the southern plains in winter. It is well known for its dark morph that is nearly all black-brown except for the grayish tail. This bird also occurs less commonly as a light morph that looks very much like the Eastern Red-tail and a range of intermediate morphs. The Western subspecies breeds in the western US and across much of Canada. The light morph birds differ from the Eastern subspecies by having dark throats and darker coloration to the upperparts with less mottling. The Western subspecies can also occur in a highly variable rufous

morph and a dark morph. The adults of these color morphs will have red tails unlike other dark morph buteos. The Alaskan, Southwestern (Fuerte's), and Florida subspecies do not occur in Iowa.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** Accidental in Iowa. It breeds in the northern plains and Rockies, but migrates away from Iowa to the southwestern US. It is the only raptor that occurs nearly exclusively within the lower 48. It is our largest buteo and occurs in three color phases: dark, rufous, and light. The light phase has a reddish tail, but lacks the whitish mottling Red-tails have on their scapulars. The adults have rufous leg feathers. The underwing coverts may be flecked with brown, but there will not be the dark patagial mark diagnostic of Red-tails. The underside of the tail and flight feathers are very light even on the rufous and dark morph birds and this is apparent at a distance. The Ferruginous Hawk is also known for its large gape as the commissures of the mouth extend well below the eye.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** Has been known to breed in northern Iowa, but it is primarily a bird of the great plains and western states. It migrates to southern Argentina every year where it has become a conservation concern. Thousands of birds die each year in agricultural fields from feeding on pesticide-laden insects. Unlike the other buteos that attain adult plumage in their second year, this hawk takes three. It is also highly variable, occurring in light, rufous and dark morphs. The light morph adult is known for its whitish throat and forehead and dark-brown breast. All morphs have dark flight feathers. This feature contrasts strongly with the white underwing coverts of the light morph bird. Unlike other dark morph buteos, the dark morph Swainson's has white undertail coverts. This bird can migrate in large kettles and is sometimes seen in great numbers on western Iowa hawk watches during the fall. Fall migration peaks in early October. It is uncommon east of the Loess Hills.

**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** Breeds on cliffs in the arctic tundra and is fairly common throughout Iowa during the winter. Some birds linger into May. It occurs in both light and dark morphs and the dark morph birds are quite common. This is our only buteo where the males and females can be separated by subtle plumage differences on the belly and tail. They are commonly seen hovering over fields like a kestrel. They can often be seen utilizing the flimsiest of perches. In flight the dark/light patterning of the light morph birds is striking. The large black wrist patches, belly, and tail band are conspicuous. The dark morph birds require careful inspection to separate from other dark morph buteos. In Iowa during the winter it is most easily confused with the dark morph Harlan's Red-tail. The Harlan's will typically have a grey tail without banding.

**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK** An IBA species. Uncommon, but may be found year round in Iowa. Locally known from Dudgeon Lake Area, George Wyth State Park, and Yellow River State Forest. They prefer wooded river valleys and swamps. They will often soar high above their breeding territories calling continuously. There are a number of subspecies found across the US, but only the Eastern subspecies is found in Iowa. They are rarely seen in open country, but will hunt from perches like a Red-tail. They are slimmer and longer tailed than the other buteos and are the most likely to be confused with an accipiter. When soaring they exhibit diagnostic crescent-shaped areas of translucency at the base of the primaries. At closer range, the alternating dark and light banding on the flight feathers, rufous barring of the breast, belly and underwing coverts make this bird easily identifiable. Ironically I find the red shoulders one of the bird's least useful field marks.

**BROAD-WINGED HAWK** Breeds in Iowa in small numbers. Best known for its large flights in eastern Iowa during fall migration. It is less common in western Iowa. Large kettles may be seen and fall migration typically peaks in mid-September. Spends the winters in equatorial South America. Like the Red-shouldered Hawk this bird prefers woodlands. It occurs most often as a light morph although a rare dark morph does exist. Interestingly most dark morphs occur in the extreme northwest of its breeding



range in Alberta. This is the smallest of our buteos, about the size of a crow. The underside of its wings are light without the patagial mark of the Red-tail and they have a relatively more pointed look to them due to the 8th primary being so much longer than the 9th and 10th. The underside of the adult's tail has two broad dark bands separated by a broad white one. This is a very good field mark on a soaring bird. Only one subspecies occurs in the US, but others occur in the Caribbean.

*Accipiters* prefer woodland habitats where their short rounded wings and long tails make them well suited for pursuit of birds, their chief prey. Adults and immatures of the species are very similar, with only the adult Goshawk being easily separable. These raptors can be seen soaring, but more often they are seen cruising fast and low following the contours of the underbrush. Extended looks are not common and a birder must have a quick eye to catch the pertinent field marks to make an identification. This only comes through preparation and experience.

**COOPER'S HAWK** Fairly common year-round resident in Iowa woodlands. May be seen in backyards hunting feeder birds, especially in winter. As in other accipiters, the females are larger than the males. Male Cooper's Hawks are always larger than female Sharp-shinned Hawks, although this difference may not be readily apparent in the field. In general Cooper's are a more robust bird, closer to crow-size. The tails are generally rounded at the end, due to the shorter outer feathers, and the tail has a relatively wide white terminal band. This band is most apparent in the fall, but may be completely worn off by the next spring. Unlike the Sharp-shinned Hawk, the Cooper's very often has its hackles raised giving its head a squared appearance. The adults often have a darkish cap that contrasts with the nape color. The heads of immature Cooper's tend to have more rufous coloration than those of Sharp-shinned Hawks and the Cooper's underparts tend to be lighter with sparser striping that is often absent on the belly. When soaring a Cooper's wings tend to extend straight out from the body with only a slight bend at the wrist and the head projects well in front of the leading edge of the wings.

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** Breeds across the northern US and Canada. Usually not found in Iowa during the breeding season. Much more lightly built than the Cooper's. Its tail may occasionally appear rounded, but typically it has corners to it. It has a white or grey terminal band that is less prominent than in the Cooper's. Sharpies rarely ever raise their hackles and so their heads usually appear quite rounded and there is usually little or no contrast in color between the cap and the nape. Immatures are typically more heavily streaked underneath than the Cooper's. The wing shape of a soaring Sharpie is very different from a Cooper's; it has a strong bend that thrusts its wrists forward nearly as far as its head. If the soaring Cooper's can be described as a flying cross, the soaring Sharpie is a flying tee. I also find that a Sharpie has a more rapid fluttery wingbeat than a Cooper's.

**NORTHERN GOSHAWK** Breeds in Canada, but some move into Iowa every winter. They are birds of the deep woods and their preferred prey is grouse. They are known to be fierce defenders of their breeding territory and will attack anything that enters, including people. They are large and can be mistaken for a buteo or gyrfalcon. The adults have a distinctive blue-gray coloration on their upperparts, fine grey barring on their underparts and a wide white superciliary line separating the dark cheek patch from the dark cap. The tail is long and may appear wedge shaped. Four irregular wavy bands are usually visible on the tail, whereas the other accipiters have only three regular bands. Immature goshawks look similar to the other accipiter, but like the adults they also have a wide supercillium, and a tail with four irregular bands. Additionally the streaking on the underparts extends to the undertail coverts.

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

### **August 6, Baker Property in Cedar County.**

We had a beautiful day with temps in the 80s. Dick and Deb Baker's 100+ acres is comprised of savannah, wetlands (constructed), new prairie in the yellow phase, piney woods, and two ponds. Dick showed us an aerial shot from the fifties and a more recent one. He and Deb have been restoring the woods to savannah that can be clearly seen in the 1954 photo. The hay field was turned to prairie about three years ago at which time the three wetland areas were constructed on the border of the prairie with the woods. The two ponds were constructed in the 60s and the pines were planted at that time by the previous owner. Dick and Deb are keeping species lists of birds, wildflowers, butterflies and odonates. We added a mere 2 species to the 98 birds already recorded. I told Dick we would come back and try to up the list in the spring. This is a fascinating spot to bird and should be great in the spring for warblers.

Participants: Dick and Deb Baker, Bob Cruden, Karen Disbrow (leader), Jonni Ellsworth, Linda Rudolph, Marcia and Dick Shaffer.

Birds (32 species): Turkey Vulture, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Field Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Red-winged Blackbird, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

**August 18, Annual Picnic** at Hickory Hill Park. This year's picnic was well attended and there

was a lot of good food. Thanks to Drew Dillman for getting the grill started again and to Ann Bagford for bringing tablecloths and helping me set up.

Attendees: Ed Allgood, Ann Bagford, John Broz, Chris Caster and Terry Lindquist with Benjamin and Emma, Drew and Judy Dillman, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Jonni Ellsworth, Jim and Karole Fuller, Therese Guedon, James Huntington, Tom Kent, Bernie Knight, Ken and Mary Lowder, Richard and Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Marcia Nagle, Richard and Gerry Tetrault with grandson Evan Grau.

– *Karen Disbrow*

**August 21, Hawkeye Wildlife Area.** The temperature at dawn was 65°, wind was NW at 3mph, and skies were mostly clear. I had considered starting at Hickory Hill Park for migrating passerines, but a quick walk through a corner of the park, on the way to the Hy-Vee meeting place, convinced me that it wasn't worth it. Some of the group at Hy-Vee bailed on the trip right away to head off to look for the reported Royal Tern at Rathbun Lake.

We headed along Swan Lake Road in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, pausing at the turnoff to the Babcock Access to watch passerines filtering through the trees. We then hastened toward Greencastle Avenue, hoping the cloud cover would last long enough to mute the light, so we could easily look east. It didn't work. It cleared.

Of course it didn't matter much, as we found few shorebirds at Greencastle, very few. We headed back to the Babcock Access, where we found a couple more shorebirds, and watched a harrier hunting. We tried Round Pond, where we had a cooperative Sedge Wren, and finished the day with another check of Greencastle.

Participants: Susan Baker, Mark Brown, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Tony Franken, Therese Guedon,

James Huntington (leader), Tom Linehan, Linda Rudolph, Linda Wilmarth.

Birds (49 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch.

– James Huntington

**September 10, Lake Macbride Birding and Boating.** It was an oppressively hot morning: the birds knew it and most of them stayed home; eleven birders ignored it and were rewarded with a nice boat ride and a tasty brunch, but scanty sightings. Even the usually abundant Belted Kingfishers along the shores of Lake Macbride were not to be found. The most excitement of the morning took place at the silt dam on the north arm of the lake, where we had a great look at a juvenile wader, and then varying opinions and lots of page flipping before realizing that it was a young Green Heron and not a bittern. Many Wood Ducks and gulls were in the mud flats above the dam. Two Osprey were found perching and calling near their platform nest.

Participants: Ed and Jean Allgood, Barbara Beaumont, Karen Disbrow, Jane Knoede, Kathy Leaven, Richard and Nancy Lynch (hosts), Marsha Shaffer, Judy Sutherland, Rosnah Thomason.

Species (12): Wood Duck, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron (adult and juvenile), Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Cardinal.

– Richard and Nancy Lynch

**September 15, Meeting.** Anticipating the annual hawk watch, Chris Caster gave a presentation on raptor identification that covered the six *Buteos* and three *Accipiters* that occur in Iowa. [For a summary of Chris' presentation, see the "Hawk Identification Workshop" feature article on page 7.]

I wish to thank a number of individuals that permitted me to use their photos for the presentation: Jay Gilliam, Kent Nickell, Bill Schmoker, Arthur Morris, Brian Wheeler.

Attendees: Jean and Ed Allgood, Ann and Jack Bagford, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Therese Guedon, Denny Hanson, Dave Kyllingstad, Ken Lowder, Ramona McGurk, Delores Meister, Jim Miller, Darlyne and John Neff, Diana Pesek, Rosemarie Petzold, Suzanne Sarlette, Jim Scheib, Bill Scheible, Marcia and Richard Shaffer, Forrest Strum, Richard Tetrault.

– Chris Caster

**September 17, Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve.** It was a beautiful fall day with mostly sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s. This equated to a large turnout of hopeful hawk watchers, but relatively few migrating hawks. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable day to spend outdoors.

As in most years, the first birds to be tallied on our board were a large kettle of Turkey Vultures and one of the local Ospreys. As the air warmed, individual accipiters and Broad-winged Hawks started to fly past. Two nice kettles of Broad-wings, containing 50 and 20 birds, were spotted briefly, but they were very high and seemed to vanish into the blue sky as quickly as they had appeared. An American

Kestrel, rare on our hawk watch, caused a brief debate as it cruised over. After noon the birds were few and far between, but we enjoyed great looks at several close flyovers, including a Broad-winged Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk.

Raptors (8 species, 137 individuals): Turkey Vulture 25, Osprey 1, Bald Eagle 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 6, Cooper's Hawk 2, accipiter sp. 5, Broad-winged Hawk 91, Red-tailed Hawk 4, American Kestrel 1.

Other Species (17): Canada Goose, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch.

– *Chris Edwards*

**October 2, Snake Creek Marsh.** Once again we made the journey to Greene County to find ourselves a Yellow Rail. We were assisted at the marsh by Steve Dinsmore from Ames, Jeff Nichol from Boone, and Jay Gilliam from Norwalk. Steve had brought with him a rope, strung with gravel weighted soda bottles. We dragged this through the grass with the group walking behind. This got to be a real burden in the long grass though and we soon lost interest in the technique. I think it might work better in shorter grasses. We weren't producing any birds with it anyhow. There weren't many birds to be had a Snake Creek that day—no rails of any kind, but the Sedge Wrens were numerous and many sat for viewing. Swamp Sparrows weren't too hard to find, but neither of our target sparrows, LeConte's or Sharp-tailed were seen.

The group tramped around for over an hour before retiring to the nearby town of Rippey for some food. Steve Dinsmore had told us of an ibis he had seen at Dunbar Slough that morning, so we decided to look for it. The slough was not too far away in southwestern Greene County. We did find the ibis, most probably a White-faced Ibis, but this immature bird was not

separable from the very similar immature Glossy Ibis. There weren't a great deal of birds at Dunbar Slough either. We were entertained by a Peregrine Falcon zipping about and we encountered small shorebird flocks, but few were identifiable as the strong wind was shaking our scopes. One of the dried up lakebeds contained a small flock of American Pipits though.

On the return we drove through the town of Coon Rapids and into northern Grundy County to visit the Garst Whiterock Conservancy where the Vermillion Flycatcher had established residence most of the summer. We didn't really expect to see the flycatcher this late in the year, but the Conservancy is always a nice place to visit. The trail follows a creek in a small valley and it was nice to get out of the wind for awhile. However the only excitement there was a call from Bob Dick regarding a report of a possible Black Rail in the Saylorville area. We hustled back to Polk County, but learned en route that Steve and Jay had already been combing the area and had repeatedly flushed a darkish Sora. So we made one final stop at the Saylorville Lincoln Access where we had seen Nelson's Sharp-tails last year—but no luck.

It was a fun trip anyway and the company was great. Thanks to everyone for being such good sports.

Participants: Brady Belcher, Mark and Matsalyn Brown, Chris Caster (leader), James Huntington, Garrison Kline, Diana Pesek, Linda Rudolph.

– *Chris Caster*

**October 9, Hawkeye Wildlife Area.** The weather forecast of sunny and 62° didn't materialize until afternoon, and we had a cold, gray morning with a brisk easterly breeze for birding. Our first stop at Hawkeye was along James Avenue, where the hedgerows along the road were full of White-throated Sparrows and a few other passerines. A Cooper's Hawk passed by quickly. We walked to the ponds east of the road, which were almost dry, and found many

Swamp and Song Sparrows but little else. A few Golden-crowned Kinglets and other small birds were foraging in the woodlot back near the road.

After a pit stop at Handimart, we headed to Greencastle Avenue. Several dozen shorebirds were present in the mudflats west of the road, many of them providing close-up views. We found four dowitchers which were presumed to be Long-billed because of the date, two Dunlins, one Stilt Sandpiper, and two Black-bellied Plovers, among others. We then embarked on a long walk to the east of Greencastle Avenue along the south side of the marsh, in search of our two elusive target species for the trip – LeConte's and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. The tall willows near the road contained a number of interesting passerines including Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow. A little farther along, the more adventurous members of our party (those wearing rubber boots anyway) spread out in the tall marsh vegetation in search of sparrows. We flushed many Swamp Sparrows, and several of us got brief looks at our target sparrows. Finally, after slogging along for several hundred yards, we approached an area with several clumps of small willows. In quick succession, we flushed a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow and then a LeConte's Sparrow from the thick, weedy vegetation into the small willows where they were more easily seen. Everyone present got nice views at these two beautiful sparrows.

We finished the outing at Babcock Access, where the most interesting sight was of a brown object on a distant snag. After careful study through several scopes, we determined that it was a dead cormorant, hanging by its neck which was stuck in the crotch of a tree. Morbid, but interesting nonetheless.

Participants: Ed and Jean Allgood, Bob and Dara Dick, Chris Edwards (leader), Joan Fisher, Linda Fisher, Roger Heidt, Dave Kyllingstad, Ken Lowder, Richard and Nancy Lynch, Cathy Mandarino, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible, JoAnn Whitmore, Pete Wickham.

Birds (62 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Palm Warbler, LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

– Chris Edwards

**October 13, Meeting.** Jim Scheib presented on he and Sharon's spring trip to Iceland via a Holland America Cruise. This was not principally a birding trip, but the Scheibs made the best of every opportunity to observe and photograph the bird life. The ship departed Copenhagen with 800 people and made three Icelandic stops: at Akureyri in the north, Isafjord the capital of the Westfjords in the northwest, and Reykjavik in the southwest.

The Republic of Iceland, situated in the north Atlantic, is about the size of Virginia and covers approximately 40,000 square miles. Although ten percent of Iceland is covered by glaciers, it is warmed by the northerly flow of the tropical Gulf Stream Current and the land supports agriculture and the grazing of animals. There are forested areas in Iceland, but they are few.

Most of the vegetation consists of grasses, forbs, and small shrubs. Much of the interior of the country is an uninhabited wasteland. There are active volcanoes on Iceland and the thin crust makes geothermal plants possible. It lies at the northern end of the mid-Atlantic Rift between the Atlantic and Eurasian tectonic plates and this Rift comes on land to form a great crack in the earth that is spreading apart at the rate of 2cm annually. The landscape is full of weird volcanic rock formations, many of which resemble trolls. Thus, Iceland is the Land of Trolls, mythical creatures that turn to stone when exposed to daylight. Irish Monks first settled Iceland in the 8th Century. The first Norse settlement occurred in 930 AD. The current population numbers about 281,000.

Maybe the most interesting bird photographed while plying the North Atlantic was a Eurasian Collared Dove—they're everywhere! But obviously this bird was a stowaway. A Great Skua and Northern Gannet were photographed, as well as Northern Fulmar, possibly the most common species in the North Atlantic.

Akureyri, with 15,000 inhabitants, is the 2nd largest town outside of the capital city. It is located 60km south of the Arctic Circle at the end of Iceland's longest fjord. The Scheibs photographed Common Eiders, Redwing (a thrush), and Common Redshank there. They also made a trip to the nearby Godafoss, a spectacular side-by-side waterfall.

The most anticipated birding destination was the trip to Vigur Island, which lies in the Westfjords, a series of peninsulas in northwestern Iceland. The Westfjords represent less than one-eighth the country's land area, but their jagged perimeter accounts for more than half of Iceland's total coastline. This is the western-most piece of land in Europe and home to its largest sea-bird cliff, the Latrabjarg. This cliff stretches for 14km along the north of Iceland's second largest bay, Breidafjordur, and it is 444m at its highest point. It is home to over a million seabirds including the largest Razorbill Auk colony in the world. Vigur Island lies in a

smaller bay to the north, Isafjardardjup. It has colonies of eiders, terns, puffins and guillemots. The same family group has owned Vigur Island for centuries. The few families that live on Vigur collect the down from the abandoned nests of the Common Eiders, clean it, and ship it off to pillow manufacturers. Nesting Arctic Terns will attack anyone who comes near. The people hold sticks above their heads, as the terns go for the highest object. The Scheibs got many great photographs of Atlantic Puffins and Black Guillemots. Both birds nest in burrows in the grassy hillsides there. You can tell the guillemot burrows by the mess. The puffins keep the entrances to their burrows free of any fecal sacs. The Atlantic Puffin is the most numerous bird in Iceland. Many millions breed there making Iceland the world center for the species.

Other fine birds seen by the Scheibs included: Whooper Swan, Harlequin Duck, Eurasian Widgeon, Meadow Pipit, Northern Wheatear, Northern Lapwing, Common Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake. Thanks Jim for a very interesting presentation.

Attendees: Mark and Matsalyn Brown, Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Chris Edwards, Linda and Roger Fisher, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Troy Kelsay, Bernie Knight, Dave Kyllingstad, Arnold Lindaman, Ken Lowder, Richard Lynch, Gail and John McLure, Delores and Larry Meister, Darlyne and John Neff, Diana Pesek, Ron Price, Suzanne Sarlette, Sharon Scheib. *– Chris Caster*

**November 6, Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area** near Palo in Linn County. A total of thirty-one species was identified on the trip, but the big surprise was the almost total lack of waterfowl present on the lake. A couple of Ring-necked Ducks, a small flock of American Coot, and a Pied-billed Grebe managed to keep us from being skunked altogether. The highlight was great looks at an actively hunting Northern Shrike. The group was also treated to an Osprey flying over the lake at very close range.

On the way back to Iowa City, some of the group stopped at Swan Lake and found several duck species including Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, and also a few shorebirds. We also walked a stubble field just west of the Babcock Access Road where a nice flock of seven Snow Buntings was found. The flock was last seen flying westerly and Chris Edwards later reported seeing likely the same group of birds on the boatramp on Greencastle Avenue. A Common Snipe was a flyover.

Participants: Nora Becker, Colleen Brems, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Roger Heidt, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Ken Lowder (leader), Cathy Mandarino, Diana Pesek, Bob and Joan Stearns.

Birds (31 species): Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Northern Shrike, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, American Goldfinch.

– Ken Lowder

**November 17, Meeting.** Ty Smedes is a professional wildlife photographer living in Urbandale and he presented on his two safaris to East Africa. He is hoping to organize another trip next year and welcomes anyone interested to contact him. His website is [smedesphoto.com](http://smedesphoto.com) and his photos can be viewed there.

The first stop was Samburu National Park in north central Kenya. Ty described how he and the others would get into the bush at sunrise to take advantage of the low-angle light of early morning. Ty also uses a lot of fill flash, because

it helps reduce shadows. The scenery at Samburu was described as “gaga” and there was the continual chatter of birds. Photos included Impala, Dik-Dik, Gerenuk, Leopard, Reticulated Giraffe, and the “red” Elephants. Birds included Little Bee-eater and White-throated Bee-eater.

Next Ty took us to Lake Navaisha in south central Kenya, not far from Elsamere, the home of Joy Adamson of “Born Free” fame. Photos included Colobus Monkeys, Pied Kingfisher, and Sacred Ibis with a crawfish. He watched the Ibis chase something around a rock in the water for quite awhile. Once caught, the ibis smartly brought it to dry land to dispatch it. He wasn’t going to take a chance on losing it in the water again.

The Maasai Mara or “Spotted Land” lies along Kenya’s southern border with Tanzania. It is named for the Maasai, the semi-nomadic tribal peoples who have dominated the savannah of East Africa for many centuries. Ty got some photos of these people while visiting a Maasai boma. The boma is a small compound surrounded by a high dense fence made from the limbs of Acacia Trees. This fence keeps the people and livestock safe from the many large predators that hunt during the night. The Mara River runs through the region and is a dangerous crossing due to the large crocodiles living there. Ty got a photo of one of these safely from the embankment above. The river also provided Ty with some interesting photo opportunities as Zebras used a variety of strategies to cross safely. Photos from this region included Black Rhino, Cape Buffalo (one of the world’s most dangerous animals) with attendant Oxpeckers, Warthogs, Lions, Topi (the fastest of antelopes), Hippos, and the spectacular African Gray Crowned Crane.

Just east of the Maasai Mara is the Amboseli National Park. From here Mount Kilimanjaro can be seen to the south in Tanzania. Photos from here included Cape Buffalo, Spotted Hyena, Hippos with backs covered in marsh vegetation, and an African Fish Eagle.

Across the border in Tanzania, Ty visited Tarangire National Park. This region is famous for the extremely large and thousands of years old Baobab trees. Ty had a photo of one dwarfing the Range Rover, as well as Superb Starling, which truly is, and Lilac-breasted Roller.

Also in Tanzania is Ty's favorite place in the whole world, Ngorongoro Crater. This crater is a caldera, the remnant of collapsed volcano estimated to have been bigger than Kilimanjaro. This region of Africa has a number of these and this is the largest. It is approximately two thousand feet deep and 12 miles in diameter. There are a variety of habitat types including a soda lake, Lake Magadi, two large marshes and the Leraï Forest. The animals are easily approached within the crater. Animals photographed included Eland, Grant's Gazelle, Burchelle's Zebra, Cerval Cat, and Leraï Forest Monkey. The crater also boasts some of the largest elephants in the world. The older bulls come here to spend their final days. Ty got a photo of one of them. The birds photographed included Blacksmith Plover, Greater and Lesser Flamingos. The Lesser Flamingos do a thing called "head flagging" which Ty first had seen in the Disney film "Fantasia". Until now he had thought those movements were made up by the Disney artists.

Ty's final stop was in the Serengeti. These grasslands lie in the north of Tanzania and are continuous with the Maasai Mara in Kenya. Ty got some great pictures of Cheetahs here as they tag teamed to run down a gazelle. Also photographed were a calving Wildebeast and a Dung Beetle trying hopelessly to roll her bail up a tire rut in the road. Much of Ty's

photographic success comes from anticipating events. When Ty found an African White Backed Vulture on a carcass he knew that if he waited for the crowd to arrive he would get some great shots. The vultures did not disappoint.

Ty didn't either. Thanks Ty for a fantastic presentation. We had perhaps our largest attendance ever.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Barbara Beaumont and Kurt Hamann with son John, Lois Beasley, Colleen Brems, John Broz, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Dean Colton, Bob and Dara Dick, Judy and Drew Dillman, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Bess and Edgar Folk, Jim and Karole Fuller, David Goodwin, Therese Guedon, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Marilyn Lipke, Nancy and Richard Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Delores and Larry Meister, Shawn Messer, Jason Paulios, Diana Pesek, Ron Price, Suzanne Sarlette, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Marcia and Richard Shaffer, Wilford Yoder.

– Chris Caster

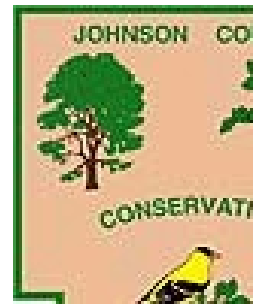






## Bird Watching Classes Tuesdays in March & April at Kent Park

The **Iowa City Bird Club** and the **Johnson County Conservation Department** are offering a 6-week **Introduction to Birding Course** at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. There will be six Tuesday evening sessions along with five weekend field trips to area birding hot spots.



**Tuesday evening sessions** are \$5 each for adults, and free for children accompanied by an adult. Iowa City Bird Club members receive free admission (a one-year membership is \$15, or \$10 for students). Participants may attend all six sessions or pick one or more to attend. Classes can hold 30, and advanced registration is requested – please call Brad Freidhof at (319) 645-2315 by noon of the Tuesday session. Handouts and refreshments will be provided. Come to class early and bird the loop path near the Conservation Education Center.

**Weekend field trips** are free. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring binoculars to all field trips; if you don't have a pair let us know in advance and loaners can be arranged. Spotting scopes are helpful for viewing shorebirds and waterfowl; if you have one bring it. Bird club members will have several scopes available on those field trips requiring one. **All field trips will depart from the Dodge Street Hy-Vee in Iowa City; meet in the SW corner of the parking lot.** For more information on field trips, call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

**Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING I.** This will include field identification of birds, field guides, and equipment that every birdwatcher needs, or might someday need.

**Saturday, March 25, 8 a.m. Field Trip to CONE MARSH.** Located about 25 miles SE of Iowa City, Cone Marsh is an excellent place to view migrating ducks, geese, and other water birds. Wear boots for walking in wet areas, and bring a spotting scope if you have one.

**Tuesday, March 28, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II.** Continuing the topics from the first session.

**Saturday, April 1, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HAWKEYE WILDLIFE AREA** near North Liberty. We expect to see ducks, geese, American White Pelicans, and other early spring migrants. Wear boots for walking in wet areas, and bring a spotting scope if you have one.

**Tuesday, April 4, 7 p.m. WHERE TO BIRD IN JOHNSON COUNTY.** Well known, lesser known and secret places to watch birds and study nature in and around Johnson County.

**Sunday, April 8, 8 a.m. Field Trip to KENT PARK** near Tiffin. We will explore the trails in Kent Park looking for migrating songbirds and resident woodland birds.

**Tuesday, April 11, 7 p.m. SHOREBIRD IDENTIFICATION.** James Huntington, an expert birder who has traveled extensively throughout North America, will share tips for learning this difficult group of birds.

**Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS.** This session will cover the common birds found in our area's backyards during the year, and what types of feeders and food to use to attract them.

**Saturday, April 22, 8 a.m. Field Trip to MACBRIDE NATURE-RECREATION AREA.** Visit the Raptor Center, observe birds up close from the bird blind, and hike the nearby trails.

**Tuesday, April 25, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION.** Warblers are coming! Warblers are among our most colorful birds. Compare and contrast similar warblers.

**Sunday, May 7, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HICKORY HILL PARK.** This park is a great place to view warblers and other migrating songbirds.

## **Johnson County Birding Highlights, Fall 2005**

**Mike Dooley**

### *AUGUST*

The fall season in Johnson County kicked off at Hawkeye Wildlife Area with the sighting of a LITTLE BLUE HERON on August 4th, relocated a few days later. The bird was in the small wetland patch across from Madsen Pond, along the far western section of Swan Lake Road. A week later, on the 11th, shorebirds from Sand Point to Babcock Access on the upper reservoir included 8 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS and one each of RUDDY TURNSTONE and BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER. On the 15th, a SNOWY EGRET was in among the other waders at the small marsh off 200th St. at Lake Macbride. This uncommon egret continued nearly to mid September. An outstanding yardbird on the 18th was a HOODED WARBLER at a residence just north of Iowa City. A couple of days later, two UPLAND SANDPIPERS were spotted half hidden in the shoreline grass off Greencastle Ave.

Little else was reported in the county until the 28th, when 11 BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS and 6 RED-NECKED PHALAROPES were at an inlet on the reservoir between Babcock Access and Sand Point.

### *SEPTEMBER*

Perhaps the best bird of the season in Iowa showed up at Lake Macbride on September 4th, a female MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD, undoubtedly blown off course by hurricane Katrina. This bedraggled-looking vagrant spent almost its entire first day (that we know of) perched lethargically in a snag along the north arm's south shore. Late the next morning, however, and to many observers' surprise, it abruptly took wing and disappeared high and far away. Meanwhile along the trail to the frigatebird were two each of WHITE-EYED and BELL'S VIREOS, as well as an arriving pair of RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES. The White-eyed Vireo group stood at three birds on the 9th.

On September 6th, a male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER made an appearance in the south canyon at Hickory Hill Park, and was relocated the next morning. Another report from Hickory Hill of a Black-throated Blue came on the 11th, possibly a different bird, and this one-day sighting was followed in turn by a female on the 12th.

On the 13th, the west side of Greencastle Ave. at Hawkeye W.A. produced two PIPING PLOVERS, which were joined by a RED-NECKED PHALAROPE on the 14th. About a week later, on the 20th, the west side was extremely dried up and produced, among other shorebirds, four very late WILSON'S PHALAROPES along with a flyover SWAN SPECIES. Back in Iowa City that same day, around 500 migrating BROAD-WINGED HAWKS passed over Hickory Hill Park in more or less a single flock. Before even the halfway mark, this proved to be the last notable sighting for September.

### *OCTOBER*

After a slow fortnight in the county, October opened with the first sighting of NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW, two birds east of Babcock Access. On the same outing, both a SNOWY EGRET and an AMERICAN BITTERN were on the west side of Greencastle Ave., along with one each of BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER and AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER. A couple of days later, on the 3rd, a MERLIN was sighted along the drive to Babcock Access. Possibly the same bird was seen shortly thereafter from Greencastle.

The following weekend, on the 9th, an Iowa City Bird Club outing turned up several NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED and LECONTE'S SPARROWS in the marsh vegetation east of Greencastle Ave. The report of the LeConte's Sparrows meant that all 24 regular Iowa emberizine family species had been accounted for in Johnson County in 2005, including Spotted Towhee and Smith's Longspur. Eleven shorebird species still making their appearances around Greencastle included two BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS. On the 14th, the plovers were still present and were joined by two AMERICAN AVOCETS. On the other side of the interstate, on the 19th, a WESTERN GREBE was discovered on the lower reservoir at the Sandy Beach-Twin View Heights area. It was accompanied by 3 HORNED GREBES. The Western Grebe was relocated off and on for a week, while two of the Horned Grebes remained until the 22nd.

On the 26th, a PRAIRIE FALCON made an appearance just off I-380 along F-28 near Hawkeye W.A. The following day SNOW BUNTINGS arrived in the county. Four were at the S&G Materials sandpit south of Iowa City and three were along Greencastle Ave. north of Swan Lake Rd. As many as seven buntings were seen off and on here into the second week of November.

### **NOVEMBER**

A sighting of a BLACK SCOTER off Sandy Beach on the 2nd started the final month of the fall season. Also on hand were 7 HORNED GREBES. That same day back at Hawkeye W.A. a pair of EURASIAN TREE SPARROWS were along Swan Lake Rd., just east of the Babcock Access entrance lane. In the fields on the west side of the entrance lane Iowa City Bird Club members kicked up 7 SNOW BUNTINGS on the 6th. These were seen to fly toward Greencastle Ave. and were soon after reported from there. Perhaps these were some of the same Greencastle buntings from the last week in October. Either way, they proved to be the last notable birds, including waterfowl, of a surprisingly barren November.

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

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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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://icbirds.org).

### *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch*

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