
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 1

April 2006

Schedule

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

April 4, 11, 18, 25, Tuesdays, 7:00 p.m. Beginning Birdwatcher Courses continue each Tuesday through April at the Conservation Education Center at Kent Park. See page 17 for a complete schedule.

April 6, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Jim Scheib will present the Story of Crex Meadows, Wisconsin, Home to Sharp-tailed Grouse. This meeting was rescheduled due to the cancelled February meeting.

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

April 22, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP. Visit the Raptor Center, observe birds up close from the bird blind, and hike nearby trails. Jim Scheib, 337-5206.

April 23, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County for cranes, rails, bitterns, and other marsh birds. Meet at 7:30 at Hy-Vee, or join the group at 8:00 at Perkins in SW Cedar Rapids. Diana Pesek, 363-3522.

April 27, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. James Huntington and Bob Dick will present on Spring Shorebirds of Iowa.

April 29-30, Saturday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Field Trip to Crex Meadows, Wisconsin. Pre-registration is required. For more information visit www.iowabirds.org or call Jim Scheib at 337-5206.

April 29, Saturday, 8:00-11:00 a.m. Spring Cleanup Day at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. We will pickup litter along roadsides and parking lots. Meet at the blue maintenance shed at the corner of Swan Lake Road and James Avenue. Wear gloves and old clothes. Rainout date April 30, same time and place. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

April 30, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area for spring migrants. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

May 2, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Bird Watching for Kids. Rick Hollis will teach this class for children ages 6-12 at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center. There will also be a **Field Trip on May 6 at 8 a.m.** To register, call Brad Freidhof at 645-1011. If you would like to assist with the field trip, contact Rick at 665-3141.

Continued on next page →

Schedule – continued

- May 6, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Baker Property** in Cedar County. Dick and Debbie Baker's property borders the Cedar River and has ponds, wetlands, prairie, and woods. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.
- May 7, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Hickory Hill Park and Wilson's Orchard.** *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* View warblers and other migrant songbirds. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.
- May 8-12, 15-19, & 22-24, Weekdays, 6:30 a.m. Warbler Walks in Hickory Hill Park** with leader Jim Fuller, 338-3561. Meet at the north shelter parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane. Be prepared for wet walking.
- May 13, Saturday. Spring Migration Count and Birdathon.** See page 4 for more information.
- May 14, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Warblers and Waders.** Local areas for migrant warblers and shorebirds. Be prepared for wet walking. James Huntington, 621-1302.
- May 18, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Chris Caster will present on the Canada/Cackling Goose complex.
- May 19–21, Friday–Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting** at Clear Lake/Ventura. For more information visit www.iowabirds.org or call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.
- May 21, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Gardner Property** near Morse. Bruce Gardner has invited us to explore his 80 acres of timber. Chris Caster, 339-8343.
- May 27, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey** at Daybreak 2. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.
- May 28, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Dudgeon Lake** in Benton County. *IBA SURVEY.* Chris Caster, 339-8343.
- May 29, Monday, Memorial Day, 6:30 a.m. Cone Marsh and Cairo Woods** in Louisa County. *IBA SURVEY.* Chris Caster, 339-8343.
- June 3, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Klum Lake and Cedar Bluffs** in Louisa/Muscatine Counties. *IBA SURVEY.* Chris Edwards, 626-6362.
- June 4, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey** at Sugar Bottom 1. Chris Caster, 339-8343.
- June 10, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Brinton Timber** in Washington County. *IBA SURVEY.* Chris Edwards, 626-6362.
- June 11, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey** at Turkey Creek 1. Mark Brown, 358-8765.
- June 17, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey** at Koss 1. Diana Pesek, 363-3522.
- June 18, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Indiangrass Hills** in Iowa County. *IBA SURVEY.* Mike Dooley, 354-3011.
- June 24, Saturday, 6:00 a.m. Wildcat Den State Park** near Muscatine. *IBA SURVEY.* Chris Caster, 339-8343.
- June 25, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey** at Daybreak 1. James Huntington, 338-1837.
- July 1, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Matsell Bridge Natural Area** in Linn County. *IBA SURVEY.* Meet at 7 a.m. at the Perkins in SW Cedar Rapids. Diana Pesek, 363-3522.

Schedule – continued

July 2, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Coralville Reservoir Bird Survey at Upper Hoosier Creek 1. Bob Dick, 337-4945.

July 9, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Lake Macbride. View nesting Ospreys from Richard and Nancy Lynch's pontoon boat, followed by refreshments at their home. For directions call Richard and Nancy at 624-3014.

July 15, Saturday. Annual Butterfly Count sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. We will visit Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and Lake Macbride. Contact Chris Edwards at 626-6362 for details.

July 21, Friday, 8:00 p.m. Moth Night-lighting at Kent Park. Jim Durbin will give a program on moths at the Conservation Education Center and will setup lights and sheets to attract them. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

July 23, Sunday, 8:30 a.m. Mushroom Foray. The bird club will join members of the Prairie Mushroom Club for a mushroom foray and bird hike. Bring a basket for collecting edibles. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

August 13, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Local Areas for Shorebirds. Be prepared for wet walking. James Huntington, 621-1302.

August 17, Thursday, 6:00 p.m. Annual Picnic at Hickory Hill Park north shelter. Bring something to grill, a side dish to share, table service, and drinks. For more information call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

Johnson County Spring Count and Birdathon Saturday, May 13

Last year our very first Spring Count / Birdathon raised over \$1,000 to benefit the Iowa Audubon Important Bird Areas Program and we think we can do even better this year.

Birdathons have been held annually by a number of the Audubon Clubs around the state and have been enormously successful events, raising thousands of dollars for bird conservation. People pledge a set amount per bird species found and the total number of species seen by the club will be the basis for contributions. Recent years have been highly successful. The Johnson County Spring Count has averaged 162 species in the last five years.

Our Spring Count is run just like our Christmas Bird Count, except that it is county-wide. Observers have a 24-hour period on Saturday, May 13th to count every bird they can. Both numbers of species and numbers of individual birds are recorded. The results of our nine

previous counts can be found at our club website.

There won't be an organizational meeting for the count this year, but we will meet on count day for lunch at the Coralville Hy-Vee Deli at noon. If you wish to participate you will need to contact the count compiler, Chris Caster, in advance of count day at cjcaster@earthlink.net or 339-8343. Participants can download an Official Spring Count checklist and Birdathon materials from the club website. These will also be available at the April club meetings. We are always looking to get more members involved either by birding, gathering pledges, or making a contribution.

You can also help support the IBA effort by joining us on one of our many field trips to IBA sites this season. For more on the Iowa Important Bird Areas Program go online at www.iowaaudubon.org. Thanks for your continued support!

– Chris Caster

IBA Surveys – A Call to Birders

Once again we have an ambitious Spring/Summer schedule of outings in support of the Iowa Important Bird Areas Program. As a club we will visit eight IBA sites and survey six Coralville Reservoir areas during this breeding season of May 20th through July 4th. Some of these sites have received full acceptance by the IBA Technical Committee and some are still awaiting further data.

Continued documentation of our breeding birds is central to the Important Bird Areas effort. Dudgeon Lake has been given full acceptance as an IBA, but hasn't received much documentation recently. Brinton Timber will almost assuredly be given full acceptance with the observations we make this summer. Cone Marsh, although known for its migrant waterfowl, is currently lacking data for breeding birds. Unfortunately there are more IBAs in surrounding counties to visit than we currently have time for in our schedule.

I am requesting that we all try to visit at least one IBA site to do some birding this season on our own—outside of the club's scheduled activities. There are a number of areas close by that are not part of our schedule during the breeding season: Redbird Farms, Kent Park, Hickory Hill Park, Lake Macbride State Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Hanging Rock Woods, and Sycamore Marsh.

Of the 37 IBA bird species, there is a short list that we hope to find locally during the breeding season and they can be grouped according to the basic habitats they utilize.

Woodland—American Woodcock, Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Veery, Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler
Grassland—Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows, Bobolink

Wetland—Black-crowned Night Heron, Least Bittern, Bald Eagle, Common Moorhen, Black Tern, Prothonotary Warbler
Edge Habitat—Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's and White-eyed Vireos

My suggestion would be to visit the IBA site of your choice with the expressed purpose of locating the above birds. Then go to www.iowabirds.org/iba/bird_inventory.asp to submit your observations. It is really painless and it will help a great deal. Thank you.

– Chris Caster

Coralville Reservoir Bird Surveys

In spring 2005, personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approached the Bird Club about conducting breeding bird surveys on Corps land adjacent to the Coralville Reservoir. Chris Caster and I met with Kate Soska and Mary Sue Bowers of the Corps to discuss their objectives. Kate explained that they lacked data about which bird species occurred at specific sites, and that such data could be very useful for making management decisions. They provided us with maps and aerial photographs of 17 sites adjacent to the reservoir, from the tail-waters below the dam to I-380. They asked if we could survey the areas during the nesting season and prepare a list of species found at each site.

Most of the sites are large, undeveloped areas which are not often visited by birders. It was apparent to Chris and I that this project would require a multi-year effort. We agreed to schedule one bird club field trip each weekend from late May to early July, beginning in 2005 and continuing for several years. These surveys are not an attempt to repeat the comprehensive Coralville Reservoir nesting bird survey which was spearheaded by Tom Kent in 1991-1994. Our scope this time is much more limited and we are not attempting to document confirmed breeding by each species.

In 2005 we visited 7 different sites: Squire Point, Big Buck, Daybreak 1, Daybreak 2, Macbride, Koss 1, and Upper Hoosier. We observed 78 different species, excluding obvious migrants. Some of the more significant discoveries included Cooper's Hawk, 2 Pileated Woodpeckers, Carolina Wren, and 5 Cerulean Warblers at Squire Point; Veery, 4 Cerulean Warblers, and 6 Scarlet Tanagers at Big Buck; Veery at Daybreak 1; juvenile Barred Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and 2 Orchard Orioles at Daybreak 2; 2 Acadian Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Warbler, and 3 Cerulean Warblers at Macbride; and Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, 4 Sedge Wrens, 6 Grasshopper Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrow, 15 Dickcissels, and 50 Bobolinks at Upper Hoosier.

This summer we have again scheduled a series of weekly bird surveys from late May to early July. I hope you will be able to join us for one or more of these trips. We will be visiting several new sites, including Turkey Creek and Sugar Bottom 1, in addition to some of the areas we surveyed last year. Please keep in mind that there are no trails or roads through most of these areas, and the walking can sometimes be difficult. Participants should bring water to stay hydrated, and should be prepared for poison ivy, insects, and wet vegetation. In addition, bird club members are welcome to visit any of these areas on their own – if interested, please contact me for maps and reporting forms. These surveys are a great way for us to play a small role in how these areas are managed.

– Chris Edwards

Bird Club News

Club E-Mailings

I maintain a list of e-mail addresses of the membership primarily for reminders of upcoming events and schedule changes. Occasionally I am asked to forward items to the membership and these requests often come from club members. Since I don't appreciate the SPAM that bombards my message box daily, I

don't provide the list to anyone and I do review these forwarding requests in light of what the ICBC is about. I do reject some requests—such as from the person who wished us to get involved in a campaign against the poultry industry, but occasionally someone catches me at a weak moment and something slips by.

Recently I received a forwarding request from our Johnson County Naturalist Brad Freidhof. Seeing that it was regarding Teaming With Wildlife, a non-game conservation effort, I gladly relayed the message to the membership. Unfortunately I did not notice the number of sizeable attachments to the message. I do apologize for what must have been an incredibly long download – I hope no one thought their modem was broken.

Thankfully I only received flame mail from one person and I removed that person from the list as requested. Thanks to the rest of you for your patience and understanding. My apologies and I promise to watch this in the future.

– Chris Caster

February 16th Meeting Canceled

My sincerest apologies to anyone who showed up to hear Jim Scheib's presentation on Crex Meadows. The weather was looking bad the morning of the meeting with worsening conditions predicted and I needed to make a very quick decision. An e-mail was sent to all those on our list—that was the best I could do. In hindsight I probably should have taped a sign to the Grant Wood door stating, "Meeting Canceled", but I didn't think of that at the time. Hopefully most of you stayed home anyway.

In the event of schedule changes, the club e-mail list I maintain is very useful—however I have addresses for less than half the membership. If being notified of this sort of thing is important to you, please send me your current address via a message to cjcaster@earthlink.net. Thank you.

– Chris Caster

2005 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards and Bob Dick

The 55th annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 18. The total of 62 species was slightly below the count's ten-year average of 65 species. The day was very cold with temperatures ranging from 0° – 12° F. There was a variable west wind, and partly cloudy skies in the morning gave way to sunshine in the afternoon. Average snow cover was seven inches. The Coralville Reservoir and Lake Macbride were frozen, as were most areas of the Iowa River and smaller streams. Cold weather and heavy snow in early December pushed many birds out of our area, including most waterfowl, gulls, and other water birds. Despite this, a number of unusual species were seen. The best birds found this year were Spotted Towhee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird.

Waterfowl to Raptors

Waterfowl were scarce this year and only four species were seen. Canada Goose and Mallard numbers were far below average, and Gadwall, American Black Duck, and Common Merganser were prominent misses. Three Lesser Scaup and one Hooded Merganser were nice finds on the Iowa River, as were two Pied-billed Grebes. Gallinaceous birds were more conspicuous this year due to the snow cover. Ring-necked Pheasant numbers rebounded from last year's poor showing with an all-time high count of 141. Northern Bobwhites were found for the first time in over a decade and were seen by three parties. It was a good year for raptors, with record high counts of Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks, and above-average numbers of Rough-legged Hawks. Bald Eagle numbers were below average.

Shorebirds to Woodpeckers

A Killdeer at Lake Macbride was a rare find. Gulls were completely absent from our area due to the early December freeze. After a low count last year, Mourning Doves were seen in above-average numbers. Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Barred Owl numbers were up slightly from recent years, but that may be due to observer effort rather than population changes. Our first Short-eared Owl in ten years was found south of Solon, but Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet Owls were missed for the second straight year. The four Pileated Woodpeckers provided an all-time count record, while other woodpeckers were seen in slightly above-average numbers.

Jays to Sparrows

Blue Jays were found in good numbers, but American Crows continued their downward trend. Eastern Bluebirds were present for the fifth straight year. American Robin numbers were below average, and Cedar Waxwings were seen in near normal numbers. Three Yellow-rumped Warblers found in cedars north of Amana Road were the first seen on the count in ten years. The best find of the day was a Spotted Towhee, only the second count record since the species was split from the similar Eastern Towhee. This bird was found in dense roadside cover along Ireland Avenue north of Tiffin. Fox Sparrows, once an exceedingly rare find, have now been recorded on five of the last seven counts. American Tree Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos were all seen in numbers well above their ten-year averages. Surprisingly, no Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs were found despite the snow cover. Northern Cardinals set an all-time count record, perhaps in part due to our increased feeder watching effort. One field party observed 60 cardinals at a single location along Amana Road, attracted to bird seed spread along the roadside.

Blackbirds to Old World Sparrows

Red-winged Blackbird numbers were low, and no Common Grackles were found this year. A Rusty Blackbird at Hawkeye Wildlife Area was a rare sighting, and a flock of fourteen meadowlarks at a farmstead along Half Moon Avenue provided a ten-year high count. A Brown-headed Cowbird was also an unusual find. An all-time high count of House Finches was recorded. Purple Finch numbers were average, and only a single Pine Siskin was found. Eurasian Tree Sparrows were seen at Hawkeye Wildlife Area for the third straight year, with four birds establishing a new high count.

One species, Wilson's Snipe, was seen during count week but not on count day.

This year there were 39 field observers in 11 parties. Field observers were Edward Allgood, Brady Belcher, Colleen Brems, Mark Brown, John Broz, Chris Caster, Dean Colton, Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, John Donelson, Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Mary Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Mike Feiss, Linda Fisher, Tony Franken, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Ellen Hartz, James Huntington, Dave Kyllingstad, Nancy Lynch, Richard Lynch, Edward McCliment, Ramona McGurk, John McLure, Darlyne Neff, John Neff, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Linda Rudolph, Jean Sandrock, Jim Sandrock, Jim Scheib, Tom Shires, David Weiss, and Carol Winter.

There were 28 feeder watchers at 21 locations this year, which is our best effort ever. Feeder watchers were Barbara Beaumont, Al Carr, Anne Edwards, Roger Fisher, Jim and Lynn Gardner, Marilou Gay, David and Mary Gilchrist, Gloria Henry, Anne and Chuck Hesse, Janet Hollis, Ken and Janice Hook, Nancy Johns, Barbara Kalm, Jane Knoedel, Alan Nagel, Ed and Anne Perkins, Ann and Jim Ridenour, Sharon Scheib, Dick and Marcia Shaffer, Karla Stout, and Ronnye Wieland.

This year's count was organized by Bob Dick. The results were compiled by Chris Edwards. A pre-count planning meeting was held at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller. On the day of the count we met for lunch at the North Liberty Community Center, at which time we had 57 species. At the end of the day, many participants gathered at Mondo's Tomato Pie in Coralville for a well-deserved meal and compilation.

Nationally, this year marked the 106th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. More than 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many Pacific Islands participate in this annual bird census. Christmas Bird Count results are published annually in a special issue of *American Birds*. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are also available on the Internet at www.birdsource.org, a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

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

SPECIES LIST

Canada Goose	732	Cooper's Hawk	4	Barred Owl	8
Mallard	750	<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	1	Short-eared Owl	1
Lesser Scaup	3	Red-tailed Hawk	76	Owl sp.	2
Hooded Merganser	1	Rough-legged Hawk	9	Belted Kingfisher	6
Ring-necked Pheasant	141	<i>Buteo</i> sp.	1	Red-headed Woodpecker	17
Wild Turkey	60	American Kestrel	18	Red-bellied Woodpecker	101
Northern Bobwhite	13	Killdeer	1	Downy Woodpecker	150
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Rock Pigeon	279	Hairy Woodpecker	21
Bald Eagle	36	Mourning Dove	212	Northern Flicker	37
Northern Harrier	1	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Pileated Woodpecker	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	Great Horned Owl	4	Blue Jay	265

American Crow	492	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3	Rusty Blackbird	1
Horned Lark	38	Spotted Towhee	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Black-capped Chickadee	388	American Tree Sparrow	510	Purple Finch	19
Tufted Titmouse	81	Fox Sparrow	1	House Finch	243
Red-breasted Nuthatch	9	Song Sparrow	26	Pine Siskin	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	95	Swamp Sparrow	5	American Goldfinch	292
Brown Creeper	5	White-throated Sparrow	41	House Sparrow	1,180
Carolina Wren	4	White-crowned Sparrow	6	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	4
Eastern Bluebird	13	Dark-eyed Junco	932	TOTAL SPECIES	62
American Robin	15	Northern Cardinal	744	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	9,011
European Starling	716	Red-winged Blackbird	26		
Cedar Waxwing	142	Meadowlark sp.	14		

A New View of Latin American Bird Conservation

Rick Hollis

Editor's note: this article first appeared on Rick Hollis' online blog, Thoughts of an Iowa Birdwatcher. Read more of Rick's thoughts on birds at <http://iowabirdwatcher.blogspot.com/>.

Last fall I was fortunate enough to hear Dr. Robert Ridgely speak at the Fall Meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. I came away energized and full of hope for birds in Central and South America. Dr. Ridgely spoke about his experiences studying the birds of Ecuador, including one of his discoveries of a new species. While working for the Academy of Natural Sciences in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Ridgely took three expeditions to Ecuador. These expeditions discovered seven new species. One in particular is closely identified with Dr. Ridgely and that story was part of our after-banquet talk. He told us that he was birding in southern Ecuador in 1997 and heard a call that he did not recognize. He and his colleagues started towards the call and eventually heard it again. Using a tape recorder to record the call and play it back, he was able to lure the bird into the open. It was a very distinct looking antpitta, with large white cheek patches. Dr. Ridgely knew immediately that he had never seen this species before. Given his birding experience in South America, he knew this was an undescribed, new species. In the paper which describes the bird, it was named the Jocotoco Antpitta, *Grallaria ridgelyi*. Jocotoco is onomatopoeic for the bird's call. The knowledge that this species must have a limited distribution, and was therefore living a precarious existence unless steps were taken to preserve its existence, led to the formation of the Fundación Jocotoco in 1998 in an effort to protect the only known locality of this species.

This alone was a fascinating story and a wonderful talk. But it was the discussion of the Jocotoco Foundation and their work in Ecuador which left me excited, even thrilled. I've been to Brazil twice and seen national parks that were preserves in name only. Speaking with others, I realized that similar situations existed throughout Central and South America. It was clear to me that national parks were not the answer in many countries. The Jocotoco Foundation is headquartered in Ecuador, but has received funds from a variety of sources. It works with a number of partner organizations including BirdLife International, the American Bird Conservancy, and the World Land Trust.

After starting to purchase and preserve the land where the Jocotoco Antpitta was found, the Tapichalaca Reserve, they went on to purchase other lands and manage them as private ecological reserves. The goals of the Fundación Jocotoco include community involvement, ecotourism, education, research, and reserve creation.

Let me repeat myself. The Jocotoco Foundation is an Ecuadorian organization established to protect land of critical importance to the conservation of Ecuador's avifauna and associated biodiversity. As an Ecuadorian organization, the Fundación Jocotoco escapes the resentment that might occur if it was completely done by an American or European organization. Fundación has seven preserves, which protect about 8,000 hectares. They are adding land to existing preserves to extend the protection. The areas that the Foundation selects to preserve are chosen primarily to protect endemic species with very narrow habitat and geographic ranges. While the Jocotoco Foundation preserves are established primarily to protect birds, they all protect other species of animals and many plants.

Many of the preserves of the Jocotoco Foundation have housing for visitors and scientists. At the Tapichalaca Reserve, they have built a mulching 'shed' to recycle wastes. It attracts earthworms and therefore serves as a feeding station for the Jocotoco Antpitta. This in turn attracts birders and their money into the region.

The Jocotoco Foundation's partners also work with other locally based organizations to funnel money from Europe and North America into the protection of Latin American birds. World Parks, for example works with the following organizations: in Bolivia, Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza (FAN); in Brazil, BirdLife Brazil and Instituto de Estudios Sócio-Ambientais do Sul da Bahia (IESB); in Costa Rica, Area de Conservación Guanacaste and CEDARENA; in Ecuador, Fundación Jocotoco and Nature and Culture International; in the Galapagos Islands, Fundación Jatun Sacha; in Mexico, Friends of Calakmul and ProNatura Noreste; and in Paraguay, Guyra Paraguay. All of these are locally based organizations within the country whose land they preserve. Although there may be gringo involvement, including gringos on the boards of directors, there are local ornithologists sitting on the boards who are closely involved with the day-to-day activities of the organization. These organizations and their partners help to funnel monies from the richer regions of the world into Latin American bird conservation.

In a private moment Dr. Ridgely said that he felt that the American Bird Conservancy gives you the most bang for your buck in bird conservation in the Americas. The ABC is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Charity Navigator has given the ABC four stars, compared to The Nature Conservancy's three stars and National Audubon's one star. Dr. Ridgely is Vice President for Endangered Bird Conservation for the American Bird Conservancy, and author of numerous books and articles on Central and South American birds. He was awarded the 2001 Eisenmann Medal by the Linnaean Society of New York.

References and further reading:

For more information about the Fundación Jocotoco:

<http://www.fjocotoco.org/>

For more information about the American Bird Conservancy:

<http://www.abcbirds.org/>

For more information about World Parks:

<http://www.worldparks.org/index.php>



Some of Dr. Ridgely's writings:

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul J. Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador: Status, Distribution, and Taxonomy Volume I*. Cornell University Press, 2001; 768 pages; paper.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul J. Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador: Field Guide Volume II*. Cornell University Press, 2001; 768 pages; paper.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Vol. I, The Oscine Passerines*. University of Texas Press, 1989; 579 pages; cloth.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *The Birds of South America: Vol. II, The Suboscine Passerines*. University of Texas Press, 1994; 940 pages; cloth.

Membership Spotlight on: **Chris Caster**

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles spotlighting club members. Our first subject is Iowa City Bird Club President Chris Caster. If you would like to be featured in an upcoming issue, please let me know.

Name Christopher John Caster—but you can call me Chris.

What is your occupation? General dentist for 16 years.

Tell us about your family. Married ten years to Terry Lindquist, an associate professor at the College of Dentistry; son Benjamin is nearly 5 and daughter Emma is 3 1/2.

Where did you grow up? Lived in Burlington, Iowa from 4th grade on.

When and how did your interest in birds develop? While living in Philadelphia, I took a camping trip to Maine during the summer after 2nd grade. I had a Golden Regional Guide to Acadia National Park and I spent my time from the car window and at the campsite looking for the birds pictured in the guide. It never let up from there. My Dad bought me my first Peterson guide for my tenth birthday. I was probably the only kid in Burlington to check out the Peterson series records and listen to them with the headphones at the library.

Did you have any birding mentors? Not really – Jim Fuller stoked my interest while in dental school and Chris Edwards, James Huntington and Mike Dooley have been very influential.

When did you join the Iowa City Bird Club? Probably in 1994 after returning to Iowa following four years with the Public Health Service. I had actually been a member of the IOU since 1989.

Do you remember the first bird club event you attended? It was an IOU fieldtrip to Snake Creek Marsh in 1994 to find the Yellow Rail – I still haven't seen it. My first ICBC event might have been the CBC that year.

Do you have a favorite bird or family of birds? The gulls. They are easy to spot, give you plenty of time for study, and due to their varied plumages they provide a good challenge. As a family they provide the best opportunity in Iowa to see a rarity – you truly never know what you'll find.

What particular aspects of birding interest you the most? The adventure, visiting new places, seeing new birds, friends and time alone, getting out of the house, the donuts.

Do you keep a life list? Yes, ABA 528. Iowa 333. And recently I have kept an Iowa year list.

What are the best birds you've seen in Iowa? Slaty-backed Gull, Royal Tern, Green Violet-ear, Northern Hawk Owl, Ross's Gull, Yellow-billed Loon, Groove-billed Ani, Curlew Sandpiper, Magnificent Frigatebird, Swallow-tailed Kite.

Where is your favorite place in Iowa to bird, and why? Manly – where else can you chat with friends outside a Casey's with a cappuccino and donuts, while a Northern Hawk Owl hunts across the road?

Tell us about one of your most exciting Iowa birding moments. On Friday morning, June 4, 2004 I had been searching with other local birders for Jim Scheib's Swallow-tailed Kite, when I ran out of time and headed for work. Going north on Dubuque Street I spotted the kite in a roadside tree and did a fairly abrupt "U-ey". I don't remember what the traffic was like—it probably wouldn't have mattered. I literally raced the bird back down to where I had left my fellow birders and I rushed them all up the hill to Dubuque Street where we watched the kite for many minutes sail around above us. Wow, what a bird! I still have Jay Gilliam's photo as the background on my computer desktop.

Do you have an Iowa "nemesis" bird? Black-bellied Whistling Duck.

What are your top five most-wanted regular Iowa birds? Northern Goshawk, Yellow Rail, Western Sandpiper, Swainson's Hawk, Black-billed Magpie.

Tell us about a favorite birding experience or place outside of Iowa. I was on a pelagic trip in February 1994 off Cape Hatteras. The seas were quite rough, but the skipper agreed to take everyone out for a half-day, just around the shoals. After a few hours of birding and whale watching the skipper turned the boat around for the return to port. Everyone went inside to get warm—except myself. Being from Iowa, I was already dressed pretty warmly and also determined to get everything I could out of the trip. I really enjoy being out on the ocean, so I went up to the front of the boat and rode the prow like a giant jet ski. I was about 15 feet or so above the water as the boat bounced across the choppy shoals. The wind was blowing and the spray was flying and the Gannets were all around—hundreds of them, all diving like bullets into the water from upwards of forty feet. It might have continued like that for twenty minutes or more. Incredibly cool! I never did go inside.

What are the best birds you've seen outside Iowa? Slate-throated Redstart, Red-necked Stint, Boreal Owl, White-winged Tern, White-tailed Tropicbird, Golden-crowned Warbler, Brown Jay, Smooth-billed Ani, Masked Booby, Clay-colored Robin.

If you could visit any place on earth, where would it be? Tough one—possibly the Galapagos, or Ireland for the history, pubs and music. In hindsight, I would have liked to have visited the Liverpool Cavern Club in 1962 – but of course my parents wouldn't take me 'cause I hadn't been born yet.

Do you have any hobbies or interests besides birding? Playing the electric and acoustic guitar, and I am hugely into the Beatles. Before my son was born I secretly plotted to name him George, but that would have been politically troublesome.

Do you have any favorite movies or TV shows? I recently purchased a bootleg of *Let It Be*. The DVD quality is horrible, but the rooftop concert is glorious. *Lord of the Rings* was a fantasy come true. We still don't have cable and I only watch public television. My shows are *The Red Green Show*, *Keeping Up Appearances*, *Frontline*, *The News Hour*, and *Washington Week*. I only turn the channel when the Hawkeyes are playing.

Have you read any good books lately? *Paul McCartney – Many Years From Now*, his biography by Barry Miles.

What is your favorite restaurant? The Anchor Bar in Buffalo, New York, home of the original Buffalo Wings and still the best.

My Favorite Birding Books

Mike Dooley

Inspired by Chris Edwards' article in our last issue, I thought I would pass along some of my own favorite birding literature, including, like Chris, a CD I've found useful.

Donald and Lillian Stokes, *The Stokes Guide to Spishing*. Available on CD or as software for both Mac and Windows users. A host of America's finest birders demonstrate their spishing techniques and explain how they do it. Learn the "Jolly Serpent," the "East Village Radiator," and the "Annoyed Middle School Librarian." Comes with descriptive handbook.

Rufus Buff, *The Birds of Roswell, New Mexico*. A regional guide, not useful for Iowa birding but fascinating nevertheless. Illustrated with grainy black-and-white photographs and 8mm movie camera stills. The many comprehensive treatments include the Three-winged Mockingbird, the Furry Bunting, and the elusive Green-glowing Heater Bird, a nocturnal species much prized by listers. Relies heavily on oral testimonies, mostly from alcoholics and survivalists living in trailer parks.

Luke Estick, *Heat Shimmer: The Story of My Death Valley Big Day*. Written during lucid periods from Estick's hospital bed, the book recounts the author's successful attempt to break the July big day record for Death Valley. All but four of his list of 45 birds were rejected by the California Records Committee as hallucinations brought on by heat stroke and bulk trail mix purchased in Tijuana, but these were nevertheless sufficient to eclipse William "Psychotic Bill" Hutchinson's tragic 1962 outing. An appendix includes Estick's field notes and photograph for his controversial Great Spotted Kiwi documentation, which on closer inspection turned out to be a species of barrel cactus.

Larry Nedd, *What I Have Learned from the Birds*. Literally, messages the author claims were communicated to him in spoken English by an assortment of wild birds, most of which concerned the End of Days. Unfortunately an especially charismatic Indigo Bunting directed the author to rob several convenience stores in the late 1990s, hence the book was written from Nedd's prison cell. Includes the unpublished treatise, "Apocalyptic Religious Beliefs among the *Dendroica* Family of Wood-Warblers," which is well researched if frankly disturbing. Foreword by Luke Estick.

Opa Roaness, *A Farewell to Coots*. The third book from Roaness, often called the Jane Goodall of the American Coot. After more than a decade of living with and documenting the lives of coots, Roaness's video diary of her gradual acceptance into their society recently inspired an Academy Award-nominated documentary. Sadly, however, at the end of her work the author's habit of continually bobbing her head back and forth while communicating in short, guttural grunts left her unable to assimilate back into the human world. *A Farewell to Coots* chronicles her harrowing, touching, and at times comical return to her estranged family of origin.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 8, Bird Feeder Watch Social. Ken and Mary Lowder hosted the Iowa City Bird Club's first outing of the new year – a breakfast/feeder watch. A total of twenty members attended on a warm winter morning. The weather was nice, but there was also little snow cover left leaving birds ample opportunity to forage through the woods and not at the feeders. Nevertheless, twelve species were recorded, three of which were tallied on a walk through the woods.

A huge thank-you to Troy Kelsay, a new member, who doubles as an excellent chef. Troy made delicious omelets to order for everyone.

Attendees: Barbara Beaumont, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Kurt Hamann, James Huntington, Troy Kelsay, Bernie Knight, Ken and Mary Lowder (hosts), John and Gail McLure, Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible, Richard and Marcia Shaffer, Blossom Shaw.

Birds (12 species): Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch.

– Ken Lowder

January 29, Owl Prowl. We met at 1 p.m. and then proceeded to Hickory Hill Park. The day was overcast and cool in the 30s with little or no wind. We used a tape to call a Barred Owl. After several tries over a 20-minute period we finally heard an owl respond quite a ways off. We moved to the valley and finally spotted one of the Barred Owls being mobbed by Black-capped Chickadees and a Tufted Titmouse. The owl's mate was calling periodically. Everyone

got a good look at the owl, and as an extra bonus a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker posed obligingly on the side of a tree for all to see.

Next we headed to the village of Morse to check a screech-owl box. Again we used a tape to try to draw the Eastern Screech-Owl. It was not roosting in the nest box, but did respond from the woods about ¼-mile to the west.

Satisfied with that, we moved on to the Lake Macbride area, where we walked a trail where Long-eared Owls had been seen. Only Ken Lowder, the last person on the trail, saw the Long-eared Owl flush. So we traveled on to Hawkeye Wildlife Area, hoping against hope that everyone could get a glimpse of a Long-eared Owl there. Fortunately as the owls flew everyone got a good view! Daylight was waning so we rushed down to the trail with the Great Horned Owl nesting tree. No owl was present or responded to the tape. (A few days later, a Great Horned Owl was found dead in the nesting tree. I caution everyone to be very careful when reporting owl locations.) Overall we thought it a good day with those owl sightings and responses.

On a side note, we were joined by Damien and Dean from the local mushroom club, who identified the following fungi: *Flammulina velutipes* (Winter Velvet-foot), unidentified "white paint" fungus which looked like white bird droppings on the bark of *Juniperus virginiana*, and *Ganoderma applanatum* (Artist's Conk).

Participants: Dean Abel, Lois Beasley, Barry Belcher, Colleen Brems, Barry Buschelman, Andra Dill, Karen Disbrow (leader), Linda Donelson, Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Peter Hansen, Ken Hunt, Troy Kelsay, Garrison Kline, Ken Lowder, Maggie O'Connell, Diana Pesek, Damian Pieper, Linda Rudolph, Sue Sarlette, Blossom Shaw, Dave Waters.

– Karen Disbrow

February 4, Amana Turkey Walk and Feast. A very cold day, 18° F with a wind chill of 2° F, made this a very short trip to the Amana

Woods. Northern Cardinals greeted us as we started down the trail. Very quickly the cedars were checked and we found Northern Saw-whet Owls roosting. Many other woodland birds were seen and heard. We spent a mere hour in the woods because of the cold. Then we drove to the Amana Lily Lake parking lot for a few minutes before heading to the Brick Haus restaurant for breakfast. On the way back to Iowa City, we spotted a flock of Wild Turkeys on a hillside.

Participants: Karen Disbrow (leader), John and Linda Donelson, Jonni Ellsworth, Linda and Roger Fisher, Therese Guedon, Ken Hunt, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, Linda Rudolph, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Dick and Marcia Shafer.

Birds (14 species): Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal.

– *Karen Disbrow*

February 19, Mississippi River and Quad Cities. We departed at 8:00 a.m. and made our first stop at the Rock Island Arsenal Lock Visitors Center. It was very cold, just above zero, so it was nice to view the river from inside—good thinking James. However there was very little open water and only a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers and a Pied-billed Grebe could be seen below the Arsenal Bridge.

At the Butterworth Parkway in Moline we found some gulls loafing alongside the few small patches of open water. Included in the group were a very light first-winter Thayer's Gull and a first-winter Great Black-backed Gull. Farther north we observed a flock of Common Goldeneyes with a few Common Mergansers thrown in. Handsome birds!

The Iowa side wasn't so productive. A drive around Credit Island south of Davenport didn't

produce any gulls—disappointing because on last year's field trip thousands were present roosting on the backwater ice. Lock and Dam 15 in Davenport only had a few gulls present and nothing unusual. Lock and Dam 14 also was lacking good numbers of birds and like Credit Island, there wasn't the large roost that is often found. Another light first-winter Thayer's Gull was seen at LD14 (same bird?) as well as the resident kingfisher.

Heading north on Hwy. 61 a fly-along Sharp-shinned Hawk got everyone's attention. Near the I-80 bridge, the group made a stop at the Iowa Visitors Center and then had lunch at the I-80 Truck Stop in Walcott on the trip home. Thanks to Barry for driving.

Participants: Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster (leader), Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, and James Huntington.

Birds (20 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, American Robin, European Starling, Northern Cardinal.

– *Chris Caster*

March 4, Burlington Area. We met Chuck Fuller and John Rutenbeck at the Port of Burlington at 8 a.m. The day started out at 28° F and partly sunny and progressed to mostly clear and 45° by late afternoon. We visited the cemetery, and then walked the concrete storm sewer to look for Winter Wrens. We birded along the Mississippi River south of Burlington to view ducks on the river. There were large groups of Canvasbacks, and a Bufflehead and scaup were spotted. All day long we saw flocks of pelicans moving up the river, and over 300 were seen in all. We drove to the Green Bay bottoms, and then to the Wever Elevator for viewing the Mississippi River. We went to Fort Madison, where the resident male Mute Swan

was found on the river. At Denmark, ten Eurasian Collared Doves were spotted; Chuck said that at least 25 were resident there. A Northern Harrier and a dark-phase Red-tailed Hawk were seen near the army ammunition grounds. It was a spectacular day that ended when we arrived back in Iowa City at 6 p.m.

Participants: Barry Belcher, Karen Disbrow (ICBC leader), Chuck Fuller (co-leader), Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, John Rutenbeck (co-leader).

Birds (67 Species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, scaup sp., Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Wild Turkey, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tail Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

March 12, Cone Marsh. The weekend of our annual early spring field trip to Cone Marsh was a study in contrasts. Saturday was a beautiful, sunny, 70° day. Wouldn't you know it, Sunday morning was very cold, with a bitter north wind and increasing cloud cover bringing afternoon

storms. We made the most of it, but we didn't linger very long at most of our stops.

Our first birding stop was at the Great Horned Owl nest in downtown Lone Tree. The female was busy incubating, with just the top of her head and her tail showing above the end of the snag, while the male dozed in plain view higher up in the tree.

Arriving at Cone Marsh, we stopped near the old caboose along T Ave. for an expansive view of the eastern half of the marsh. There were several thousand ducks and geese packed in here, including a large number of Greater White-fronted Geese and perhaps a hundred Snow Geese. We picked out a Ross's Goose and an American Black Duck and everyone had nice, if distant, views of these birds. After scoping the birds here, we hustled back to the warmth of our vehicles and drove to the south side of the marsh. An early Greater Yellowlegs and two Wilson's Snipes were seen along the south road. We picked up some diving ducks for our trip list before moving on.

The open water along the dike proved to be almost completely bird-free, and our stop at the boat ramp on the west side wasn't very productive either. We finished our tour along V Ave., overlooking the northwest corner of the marsh. Here we spotted several Wood Ducks and a pair of Hooded Mergansers, as well as a juvenile Bald Eagle harassing the water birds.

Several members of our party then visited a residence along 220th St., where Eurasian Tree Sparrows were seen coming to the feeders. Meanwhile, the main party drove several miles north to Muscatine County, where a Northern Mockingbird was briefly seen, and then packed it in for the morning.

Participants: Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards (leader), Jonni Ellsworth, Ken Hunt, Dave Kyllingstad, Ken Lowder, Diana Pesek, Maggie O'Connell, Paul Roisen, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Dick and Marcia Shaffer.

Birds (64 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Chris Edwards*

March 23, Meeting. Kent Nickell gave a talk on his trip to the Chan Chich Lodge in Belize during March 2005. Some of you likely remember the talk Kent gave a couple of years ago on his digiscoping technique. This time he had a number of fine photos to show us, but these were taken with a digital SLR camera instead. Kent currently uses a Canon 20D digital camera body with a 400 mm, f4 aperture, image stabilized lens and a 1.4 teleconverter. According to Kent this is about as big an outfit as you would want to haul around on your neck. Anything larger would require a tripod. This lens is powerful enough that Ken didn't take his binoculars on the trip, but did all his birding through the camera.

Chan Chich Lodge was opened in 1988 in a private forest reserve of 130,000 acres. This is within the Gallon Jug area in northwestern Belize, not far from the Guatemalan border. This area is contiguous with much larger tropical forest preserves in Belize and Guatemala. The lodge accommodations are first rate and expensive, but over 350 bird species have been recorded there.

Red-capped Manakins are common at the lodge. Oscillated Turkey, a Yucatan endemic, is the official Chan Chich bird. Kent also took a taxi to the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, located east of Chan Chich, closer to Belize City. This area had more wetland habitats than the Chan Chich area. Between the two Kent managed photos of about two-dozen bird species. The most beautiful may have been the brilliant White Hawk—the Glaucous Gull of hawks. The most interesting bird might have been the White-whiskered Puffbird—looked like a cross between a flycatcher and a small owl. The most desired bird Kent photographed was probably the Tody Motmot. Many people searched for that bird without success. Kent also managed to photograph a Red-rumped Tarantula and a Morelet's Crocodile. To view these and other of Kent's Belize photos visit: www.greenbackedheron.com. You will not be disappointed. Thanks Kent!

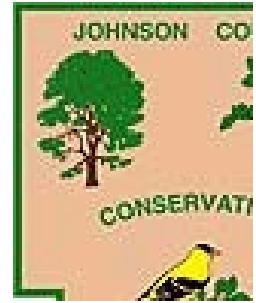
Attendees: Barbara Beaumont, Jean Bonde, Mark Brown, John Broz, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Linda and Roger Fisher, Ed Folk, Bruce Gardner, Kurt Hamann, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Ramona McGurk, Delores and Larry Meister, Jim Miller, Alan Nagel, Ron Perkins, Suzanne Sarlette, Bill Scheible, Marcia and Richard Shaffer.

– *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, Winter 2005-06

Mike Dooley

An otherwise lackluster winter in Johnson County did prove to be prolific for winter owls, with reports of Eastern Screech-Owl, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, and Northern Saw-Whet Owl. There were few waterfowl reports and a pair of American Black Ducks were the only ducks of any note. But for an interesting Red-tailed Hawk subspecies, no uncommon winter raptors were reported, and gulls were completely absent from the list as well.

DECEMBER

November had proven exceedingly sparse for good birds in Johnson County for its last couple of weeks, and the opening week of the winter season did not offer any improvement. The first report of note came on the 11th, a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD southwest of North Liberty along Forevergreen Rd. west of Hwy. 965. A couple of days later a SWAN SPECIES, either Trumpeter or Tundra, was on the river in Iowa City near City Park, imperfectly glimpsed from a moving car.

The next highlights for the county came during the annual Christmas Bird Count, held on the 18th. The best bird was a SPOTTED TOWHEE found along Ireland Ave. about 1.5 miles north of Tiffin, in the northwestern part of the county. Other good finds for the count included a SHORT-EARED OWL and three YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS. The owl topped off Johnson County's species list for 2005 at 265 birds.

Shortly before the New Year, on December 29th, the NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL that was resident at Hickory Hill Park the previous winter was found for the first time during the new season, and was relocated the following day.

JANUARY

It was nearly two weeks, January 9th, before another sighting of any consequence was reported in the county, a blue-morph SNOW GOOSE and two AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS on a settling pond at Waterworks Park on the north edge of Iowa City. The Black Ducks were content to stay into February. Also on the 9th a LONG-EARED OWL was found in the dense cedar stand off 200th St. at Lake Macbride, and the NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL was detected again at Hickory Hill Park. An EASTERN TOWHEE made a very brief appearance in a backyard in Iowa City on the 13th. The following day a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD was found along a back road in the far southeast corner of the county.

As of the 19th, a few EURASIAN TREE SPARROWS were maintaining their presence at Sandtown Cemetery near Hills in the southern part of the county. Meanwhile back to the north, two PILEATED WOODPECKERS were spotted near the Raptor Center at Macbride N.R.A. on the 21st, and a RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH was coming to the feeders there. That same day, a total of four LONG-EARED OWLS flushed during an investigation of the evergreen stands along Swan Lake Rd. just west of James Ave. In Iowa City on the 24th, a GRAY CATBIRD made an unlikely appearance along Ralston Creek in an eastside neighborhood.

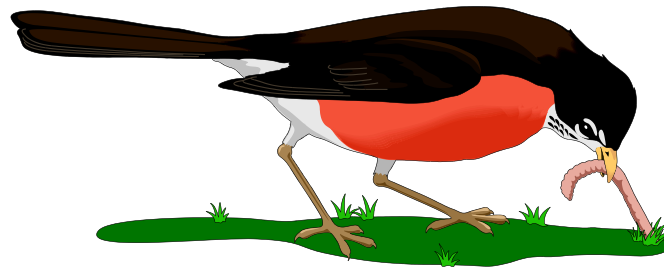
Closing out the second-warmest January in state history, the Bird Club owl expedition on the 30th used a tape to entice two EASTERN SCREECH-OWLS near Morse, in the northwest part of the county. The group also came up with two LONG-EARED OWLS in the conifers just southwest of Swan Lake Rd.

and Greencastle Ave. With three different locations, this proved to be a strong winter for Long-eared Owls in Johnson Co.

FEBRUARY

NORTHERN SHRIKES made appearances during the first week of February in the western reaches of Hawkeye W.A. One was found and relocated along Grabin Rd., continuing for at least a week, and another was along Swan Lake Rd. a couple of miles west of Greencastle. On a sad note, the GREAT HORNED OWL at Swan Lake Woods was found dead on February 8th. It was spotted in the nest hole where it had become a familiar sight to many area birders. Foul play was suspected but not officially confirmed.

Half a dozen unidentified SWAN SPECIES were flying up the Iowa River on the south side of Iowa City on the 9th. A lone SNOW GOOSE made for another winter waterfowl sighting in the Iowa City area on the 13th, seen at a small pond from the Brown Deer Golf Course. A week later, following several days of near-zero temperatures, an interesting hawk seen at Hawkeye W.A. was a dark-phase RED-TAILED HAWK, an uncommon find in Iowa of a primarily western "morph." Yet another gap of a week without reports ended when two collarless TRUMPETER SWANS were found on the 27th at Round Pond. There and at Half Moon Lake, west of Greencastle Ave., total GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE were estimated at 600.



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.

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

