
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 28 Number 2

September 2008

Schedule

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

September 14, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Iowa City Waterworks Park to look for fall migrants. This park borders the Iowa River off north Dubuque St. and has concrete sidewalks, ponds and open grasslands. Jonni Ellsworth, 338-8980.

September 19, Friday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Dick Schwab, president of the Johnson County Heritage Trust, will present on his group's activities to preserve wild areas near you. *Please note this meeting is scheduled for Friday instead of our usual Thursday meeting time.*

September 20, Saturday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Annual Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve, located along Mehaffey Bridge Rd. just north of Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Songbird banding and hourly programs will be held at nearby Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. For more information call Karen Disbrow, 339-1017 or Chris Edwards, 887-6957.

October 4, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Lake Macbride. Meet at Richard & Nancy Lynch's, 3782 Cottage Reserve Rd. We will take a pontoon boat ride around the lake to see what migrants are coming through. Kayaks and canoes will also be available should anyone want to explore the lake's edges individually or in pairs. Refreshments served after the trip. Richard and Nancy Lynch, 624-3014.

October 12, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Northern Johnson County. Explore Johnson County Heritage Trust properties in the northern part of Johnson County. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

October 16, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Topic to be announced – check our web site for updates.

November 1, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area for sparrows and other fall migrants. Diana Pesek, 560-8393.

November 16, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area near Palo for loons, grebes, ducks, and other water birds. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Ken Lowder, 351-1207.

Continued on next page →

Schedule – continued

November 20, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Jon “Hawkman” Stravers of McGregor will present on his thirty years experience monitoring Red-shouldered Hawks.

Other Dates of Note

September 12-14, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists’ Union Fall Meeting in Iowa Falls. For more information, see www.iowabirds.org.

September 20, Saturday. “Under A Cider Moon—A Celebration of Autumn” to benefit the Johnson County Heritage Trust, at the Schwab Party Barn, 2501 Sugar Bottom Rd. Music by The Beggarmen. Reception and Silent Auction at 6 p.m. Live Auction at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$50 per person. RSVP by September 12th. Contact Tammy Richardson for more information, 857-4741.

December 14, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Details in next issue.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

March 26, Meeting. Jim Scheib presented on his and Sharon’s trip to southern Sweden last September. The Scheibs participated in a Focus On Nature Tour led by Armas Hill. They flew into Copenhagen. From there it was a quick trip across the bridge/tunnel and into Sweden and the city of Malmö (pronounced Malmer). In the park at Malmo the Scheibs viewed many birds similar to our own—Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose, Moorhens, Black-headed Gull, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, and Eurasian Tree Sparrows.

The south of Sweden is full of flatland farms and windmills. Most of the birding was done about the two towns near the tip of the peninsula, Falsterbo and Skanör. The Scheibs stayed three nights in Skanör, where they found Chiffchaffs, Black Redstarts, and European Robins. The peninsula is a wonderful place to witness the European fall migration. As the birds move southward they are forced low by headwinds and many will make landfall before attempting the water crossing to Germany. This makes this area extremely attractive to birders

and they visit from many countries. During migration large numbers of whatever happens to be moving can be seen. Flocks of Northern Lapwings were seen every day. Other birds seen near Skanör included: Great Cormorant, Common Redshank, Great Black-backed Gull, Eurasian Sparrowhawk (an accipiter), White Wagtail, Northern Wheatear, and Common Eider. The most interesting bird was a Black Kite, very rare in Sweden in September; Armas Hill said it was the first he had seen in ten years of doing the trip. Also in the town of Skanör was the 13th-century Romanesque St. Olaf’s Church. This beautiful white building with red tile roofs was the filming location for the 1998 film *The Kestrel’s Eye*. Jim showed us the small window where the kestrels nested and assured us that the fledgling birds did not fall out to bounce off the rooftop far below, but promptly took wing, flying to the very top of the structure.

There is a golf course at the tip of the peninsula. And in an extremely narrow strip of land between the course and the water sits the Falsterbo lighthouse, headquarters of the migration count group “Wings Over Falsterbo.”

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2008 Johnson County Spring Count

Chris Caster

The Spring Count on the 3rd of May was a week early this year, due to a conflict with the IOU Spring Meeting over the Mother's Day weekend. We didn't get the rain that we might have, but it was cold and somewhat windy in the morning. The afternoon saw clearing skies and although a bit cool, was very nice for birding. The early morning temperature was 41 and the afternoon high was 60. The winds were out of the W/NW at 5-20 mph with gusts to 30 mph.

The species total was 154, slightly above our count average of 150. The early count date figured to produce more waterfowl and shorebirds, but fewer warblers. We had fifteen species of waterfowl, but a Red-breasted Merganser might have been the only surprise. Eleven species of shorebirds were fewer than expected, but with the Hawkeye Wildlife Area completely flooded the only accessible habitat was in wet fields along James Ave. and west of Williams Prairie. Nineteen warblers were actually pretty good with most birds found at Hickory Hill Park and the Lake Macbride area.

The day's best bird was probably the Worm-eating Warbler that Jason Paulios discovered at Hickory Hill Park. Jason got a good look and made some phone calls, but the bird couldn't be relocated. The next best bird was a Summer Tanager found by Chris Edwards at the Macbride Raptor Project bird blind. This molting male was certainly a sight in bright red and yellow-green as it visited the suet feeder. That bird was seen and photographed by others later in the day. Chris also found a couple of Louisiana Waterthrushes, another bird seldom seen in Johnson County, at Sugar Bottom Recreation Area.

As usual we had a whole bunch of additional 'good' birds. Cattle Egrets were seen at multiple locations and a Snowy Egret was at Swan Lake. Two Horned Grebes were also at Swan Lake. A Forster's Tern was at Lake Macbride. Three Sandhill Cranes and American Bitterns, a Black-crowned Night Heron, a Northern Harrier, twenty-seven Soras, and a Veery were at the South Sycamore Bottoms. A Broad-winged Hawk was at Sugar Bottom. A Peregrine Falcon was a flyover at the Swan Lake woods. A Northern Mockingbird was along the Amana Rd. and a Kentucky Warbler was at Squire Point. A Clay-colored Sparrow and a White-eyed Vireo were at Hickory Hill Park. Winter Wrens, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins, usually CBC birds, were all seen in two locations. This was the first time Winter Wren or Purple Finch has been on our Spring Count, but this was also the earliest date that it has been held.

This year's birds-that-got-away included: Northern Bobwhite, many shorebirds including Semipalmated, Pectoral, and Upland Sandpipers, American Woodcock, Franklin's Gull, Black Tern, Whip-poor-will, Common Nighthawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Parula, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. It was a pretty good day though. Thanks to everyone for helping!

Participants included: Mark Brown, Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Ken Hunt, Tom Kent, Ken Lowder, Jason Paulios, Jim Scheib, and Bill Scheible.

SPECIES LIST

Canada Goose	121	Northern Shoveler	43	Bufflehead	40
Wood Duck	26	Green-winged Teal	2	Red-breasted Merganser	1
Gadwall	4	Canvasback	47	Ruddy Duck	5
American Wigeon	15	Redhead	11	Ring-necked Pheasant	9
Mallard	46	Ring-necked Duck	3	Wild Turkey	1
Blue-winged Teal	384	Lesser Scaup	18	Pied-billed Grebe	32

Horned Grebe	2	Downy Woodpecker	44	Chestnut-sided Warbler	1
American White Pelican	40	Hairy Woodpecker	8	Yellow-rumped Warbler	195
Double-crested Cormorant	22	Northern Flicker	13	Black-thrtd. Green Warbler	2
American Bittern	3	Pileated Woodpecker	2	Yellow-throated Warbler	2
Great Blue Heron	10	Least Flycatcher	7	Palm Warbler	25
Great Egret	8	Eastern Phoebe	7	Black-and-white Warbler	6
Snowy Egret	1	Great Crested Flycatcher	8	American Redstart	2
Cattle Egret	40	Eastern Kingbird	14	Worm-eating Warbler	1
Green Heron	6	White-eyed Vireo	2	Ovenbird	8
Black-crowned Night Heron	1	Yellow-throated Vireo	3	Northern Waterthrush	7
Turkey Vulture	38	Blue-headed Vireo	3	Louisiana Waterthrush	2
Osprey	2	Warbling Vireo	4	Kentucky Warbler	1
Bald Eagle	2	Red-eyed Vireo	1	Common Yellowthroat	24
Northern Harrier	1	Blue Jay	115	Wilson's Warbler	1
Cooper's Hawk	2	American Crow	36	Summer Tanager	1
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	3	Horned Lark	9	Scarlet Tanager	2
Broad-winged Hawk	1	Purple Martin	1	Eastern Towhee	8
Red-tailed Hawk	11	Tree Swallow	434	Chipping Sparrow	108
American Kestrel	2	N. Rough-winged Swallow	58	Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Peregrine Falcon	1	Bank Swallow	49	Field Sparrow	12
Sora	27	Cliff Swallow	17	Vesper Sparrow	1
American Coot	789	Barn Swallow	142	Lark Sparrow	2
Sandhill Crane	3	Black-capped Chickadee	58	Savannah Sparrow	2
Semipalmated Plover	1	Tufted Titmouse	14	Song Sparrow	40
Killdeer	12	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	Lincoln's Sparrow	3
Greater Yellowlegs	41	White-breasted Nuthatch	24	Swamp Sparrow	21
Lesser Yellowlegs	318	Carolina Wren	3	White-throated Sparrow	142
Solitary Sandpiper	23	House Wren	68	White-crowned Sparrow	3
Spotted Sandpiper	7	Winter Wren	2	Northern Cardinal	119
Least Sandpiper	1	Sedge Wren	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	16
Short-billed Dowitcher	1	Marsh Wren	6	Indigo Bunting	16
Long-billed Dowitcher	11	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	65	Red-winged Blackbird	816
Dowitcher sp.	4	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	42	Eastern Meadowlark	31
Wilson's Snipe	3	Eastern Bluebird	13	Western Meadowlark	1
Wilson's Phalarope	4	Veery	1	Meadowlark sp.	20
Ring-billed Gull	6	Swainson's Thrush	5	Common Grackle	77
Forster's Tern	1	Wood Thrush	2	Brown-headed Cowbird	60
Rock Pigeon	54	American Robin	154	Orchard Oriole	1
Mourning Dove	64	Gray Catbird	49	Baltimore Oriole	5
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Northern Mockingbird	1	Purple Finch	5
Great Horned Owl	2	Brown Thrasher	18	House Finch	14
Barred Owl	4	European Starling	104	Pine Siskin	6
Chimney Swift	4	Blue-winged Warbler	2	American Goldfinch	76
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	Tennessee Warbler	1	House Sparrow	93
Belted Kingfisher	2	Orange-crowned Warbler	13	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	4	Nashville Warbler	10		
Red-bellied Woodpecker	22	Yellow Warbler	6		

Eye Contact with an Owl, or How I Rescued a Raptor

Carol Winter

The injured bird was an owl and looked very large to me. She hopped because she couldn't fly. I watched her, and she watched me. Those huge, gold eyes didn't miss a thing.

I called the Raptor Center. I hoped they would come to rescue her. No, the caller is to capture the bird, put it in a box, then call them. I said it appeared to be quite large—a Great Horned Owl. They said, not to worry, it is all fluff and feathers, maybe three pounds. They didn't mention the long, sharp, threatening talons.

I assembled the necessary items. I borrowed a dog crate from a neighbor. I found a soft blanket to throw over the bird. I took a laundry basket, too, thinking I might have to throw that over the bird if it struggled.

I knew the owl would not regard me as a friend. I approached carefully, about four feet away, sat down on the ground and talked to her. I told her how pretty she was, that I wanted to rescue her, I would be very careful. I introduced the laundry basket closer to her. She shifted back. I continued to talk to her, musing about what would be the best approach. I maneuvered myself to one side, but her eyes would follow me wherever I went. When I got too close, she would make a clacking noise and hiss.

Now is the time, I thought. I attempted to throw the blanket over her, but she jumped to the side just ahead of it. She tried to flee so I pursued. As soon as her back was turned, I dropped the blanket over her again. Let me add that I was very scared. However, she couldn't see and didn't struggle. I picked her up and put her in the basket keeping one hand on her at all times. The dog crate was a few feet away. I pushed her in through the door and fastened it. Then I carried her to my condo about 40 feet away.

I called the Raptor Center clinic. The recorded message stated that someone would call back. So I sat down with my owl and talked to her some more. By using a stick through the air vents, I was able to get the blanket off her. Her broken wing was conspicuously askew.

Luke, a work-study student from the Raptor Center called and said to expect him in about an hour. I called my sons and a neighbor to come see my owl. I think she felt safe in her crate. She would blink her large golden eyes at us—sometimes one at a time. No matter which side of the crate we peered in, she would turn her head that way.

I knew that other birds had been taunting her, especially a pair of robins. At one point the female dive-bombed her and she tried to hide. Four crows knew she was in the neighborhood as well.

Luke arrived with a very small cardboard carrier. My owl really was mostly fluff and feathers. He picked her up very gently showing us her feet and the inside of her mouth. Because she had been on the ground for a day or two, she was a little dehydrated. He said they would take good care of her and notify me of her progress. I might be allowed to visit her, and if she recovered completely, I would be invited to attend her release.

That was my first raptor rescue. I am usually squeamish about picking up creatures. I am thankful she didn't struggle. I have a photo of my daughter holding a Golden Eagle to be banded, and that inspired me.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

Continued from page 2.

A Black Woodpecker was unexpected flying over the peninsula, as this was far from any woodlands. Upon seeing the water, the woodpecker turned around and flew back to wherever it came. Other birds seen included: Red Kite, European Goldfinch, Black-billed Magpie, Hooded Crow, Common Buzzards, White-tailed Sea Eagle, and Rook. Jim found the Blue Tit to be his favorite.

The Scheibs also visited a thousand-year-old Viking ruin at Kaseberga. Jim nicknamed it “cownenge”, due to the cow he photographed with the stones. It was a memorial to the Danish King Ale and a ship barrow or possibly an almanac. Some think the arrangement of the stones is based on seasonal changes.

The second half of the trip was spent on Öland Island (pronounced Erlan) off the southeastern coast. It is 100 miles long and 12 miles wide and can be reached by bridge from the city of Kalmar. There has been human settlement on Öland for 7,000 years. The largest town is Borgholm where the Danish king had a hunting castle. The island had once been a royal hunting preserve and the commoners were once prohibited from killing anything there upon penalty of death, including varmints that ate their crops. The headquarters of the Swedish Ornithologists' Union is in the town of Stenasa at the bookstore Naturbokhandeln. They've got everything for birders and definitely worth the stop.

The island maintains about 400 windmills and all are on the map. Most are to grind grain, but one was used to drag building stones over a stone circle, scouring them smooth—this used to be done with oxen. Other interesting sites were a 10th-century runestone in memory of Sibbi the Good and the 13th-century Chapel of St. Birgitta at Sikavarp. The story on the chapel

was that the bones of Saint Bridget were being moved from Ireland to Rome, but en route the ship made some other stops and one of them was on Öland Island. The chapel was built merely because the relics had stopped there on the journey.

Traveling south along the coasts of the island there can be a continual procession of water birds. One morning counters tallied 35,000 Common Eiders before 10 a.m. At the south of Öland is the Ottenlay Fagelstation. This is a bird banding station that happened to have banded their one-millionth bird while the Scheibs were there, since 1946. It was a European Robin. Birds seen there included: Greylag and Barnacle Goose, Brant, Jackdaw, Firecrest, Pied Avocet, Pied Flycatcher, and White-tailed Sea Eagle. The flocks of Common Cranes were a favorite.

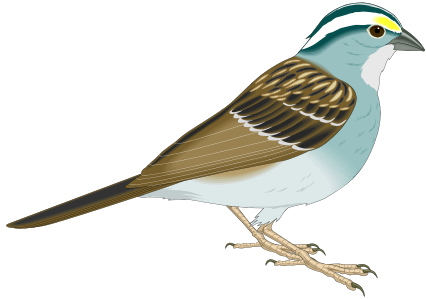
Other birds seen on Öland included Blackbird, Great Crested Grebe, Coal Tit, Greater and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Eurasian Green Woodpecker, Rosy Starling, Great Cormorant, European Golden Plover, Fieldfare, Raven, Siskin, and Greenfinch. Mute Swans were everywhere. The best bird was an Egyptian Goose, which is not unheard of, but very unusual in Sweden. It likely came from Holland, as they are feral there. The Scheibs also saw some interesting mammals on the trip. Fallow Deer, smaller than our deer, were seen. They joked about a Moose crossing sign by the road and then they saw one, in the road. It was the first Armas Hill had ever seen there. A Harbor Seal was also a very interesting sighting.

113 species of birds were seen. Of those 76 species were recorded at Falsterbo and Skanör, and 87 species were found on Öland Island. For more on Focus On Nature Tours, Inc. visit www.focusonnature.com.

Thanks to Jim and Sharon for sharing their adventures. It was really a wonderful presentation. Thanks to Bernie and Karen for the refreshments.

Attendees: Mark, Matsalyn, and Russell Brown, Barry Buschelman, Karen Disbrow, Chris Caster, John and Linda Donelson, Rick Hollis, Kenneth Hunt, Lauren and Doina Johnson, Paul and Lorraine Kent, Bernie Knight, Dave Kyllingstad, Viana Rockel, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Dick and Marcia Shaffer, Dick and Gerry Tetrault.

– Chris Caster



March 29, Cone Marsh. Fourteen observers enjoyed a lovely early spring morning at Cone Marsh. One highlight was a close flyover of twenty-two Sandhill Cranes, a greater number than any of us could remember seeing previously in Iowa. Another highlight was a close fly-by of two Trumpeter Swans, slowly moving past us into the wind and serenading us the whole way.

Participants: Ed and Jean Allgood, Barry Buschelman, Bob and Dara Dick, Chris Edwards, Rick Hollis (leader), Ken Hunt, Lauren and Doina Johnson, Richard and Nancy Lynch, Steve Schornberg, Bernard Sorofman.

Birds (51 species): Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Horned Lark, Eastern Bluebird, American

Robin, European Starling, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– Rick Hollis

April 5, Sycamore Bottoms and Sand Lake. *Beginning Birder Trip.* The day started out clear and sunny with a crisp 45F temperature. The birds listed were primarily at Sycamore Bottoms except where noted. Chorus frogs were heard at both locations.

Birds (31 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Merganser (Sand Lake), Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Common Loon (Sand Lake), Pied-billed Grebe (Sand Lake), Horned Grebe (Sand Lake), Great Egret (Sand Lake), Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove (Sand Lake), Belted Kingfisher (Sand Lake), Eastern Phoebe, American Crow, American Robin, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

– Karen Disbrow

April 6, Redbird Farms Wildlife Area. It was forty degrees at dawn and sixty degrees by 10 a.m. – partly cloudy with a south wind. We met at Fin and Feather and drove to Redbird Farms, stopping to watch a farm pond full of Northern Shovelers and teal, and finding several shovelers and Wood Ducks on the marshes on the south side of Black Diamond Road. We found a pair of American Kestrels on the wire at the Redbird Farms parking lot.

We walked to the large marsh area across the street and found Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, a few Blue-winged Teal, and one coot. As usual, pheasants sounded off all around us, and the songs of Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows dominated. Several mewling Wood Ducks flew overhead.

The many sparrows usually found around the parking lot were absent, with only a few Song Sparrows and cardinals present, but our first pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers turned up here, as well as a welcome Eastern Towhee, along with several White-throated Sparrows.

We looked in vain for Fox Sparrow—the usually reliable resident—and continued into the woods along a deer trail, finding a Winter Wren scolding near the north branch of Old Man’s Creek. The woods were remarkably silent with only an occasional sound of cardinal and Song Sparrow, and no Downy Woodpeckers. We eventually climbed a hill out of the creek bottom, scaring up a Hermit Thrush and an Eastern Phoebe and three more Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

The wind was stronger as we descended to a row of ponds along the west side of the reserve. There we found a lone Canada Goose (we could hear many more in the distance), a Pied-billed Grebe, and a Northern Flicker. The only sparrows present were Song Sparrows.

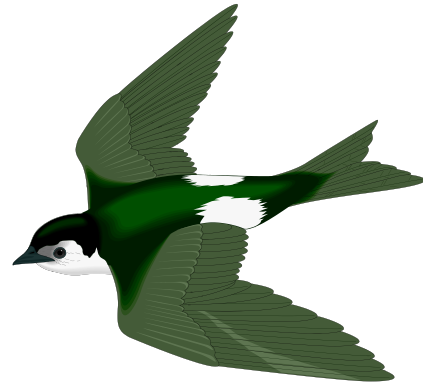
We missed several species seen here the previous day: Pileated Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Tree Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglet, and many Northern Flickers. But we were delighted to have found some of our favorite target birds: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, and Eastern Towhee.

Participants: Linda Donelson (leader), Therese Guedon, Lois Hughes, Merle Ihne, Marybeth Slonneger.

Birds (31 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, American Coot, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker,

Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (5), Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, Eastern Towhee, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark.

—Linda Donelson



April 16, Meeting. Lon Drake, UI Geology Professor Emeritus presented on the development of the South Sycamore Bottoms. The project was primarily initiated for storm water management, but was also highly desirable as a greenbelt as the area south of Highway 6 is fast being developed for housing. Lon appears to have been the perfect man to head the project with his strong background in hydrology, his concern for the environment, his creativity, and his hands on approach.

The first job was to sample the soils in the area. In this way, those bidding on the project could be certain of what they would deal with during construction. Reducing uncertainty helps reduce costs. The pre-sampling found an area of quicksand, which had to be drained. Evidently quicksand was a common feature on the Iowa landscape prior to tiling for agriculture.

The project area originally contained sewage lagoons surrounded by berms. The whole area was going to have to be reconstructed to allow for water flow in a southeastern direction, from the housing developments along Sycamore St. towards the Iowa River. Control and filtration of runoff was to be accomplished by a series of semicircular hemi-marshes. Hemi-marsh

contains half emergent plants and half open water, which is good for waterfowl as well as filtration. The wide flat floors for water retention were made first. The safe sludge from the sewage lagoons was mined and mixed with topsoil. Access was made to sewer lines. Eighteen-inch high berms were created to separate the marsh ponds. Some of these were bare dirt and some had riprap or other retention features; even willow thickets were utilized.

Mosquitoes are always a concern around places people live. Although malaria hasn't been a problem since the 1880s, West Nile could certainly be present. Drain down structures for each of the ponds can be seen as box tops along the trail and these might be used to combat mosquitoes if there is a problem. Fat head minnows were also stocked and Lon brought in buckets of clams collected during the Lake Macbride drawdown.

There was an existing seed bank that gave rise to some of the vegetation, but other areas had to be planted. Water lilies, reed canary grass, sagittaria, crimson smartweed, prairie cord grass, rose mallow, wild rice, swamp milkweed, and verbane are some of the plants utilized. Lon recommended planting big chunks over little plugs, as the chunks survive the waterfowl. Wild rice is a finicky annual and a good indicator of water quality, but unfortunately the waterfowl ate it all. Burning is needed periodically to control trees and shrubs and Lon has been getting after the city to do the job.

The birds seem to be very happy with the current situation. Yellow-headed Blackbirds nested in 2004. These birds require emergent vegetation in 18-24 inches of water for nesting. A young Virginia Rail was also found there. Many of us visit in April and May for shorebirds and waterfowl. It is one of the best locations in Johnson County to find bitterns, rails, Black-crowned Night Heron, Sandhill Crane, Willow Flycatcher, Black-billed Cuckoo, Marsh and Sedge Wrens.

The marsh is for people too. One high sewage lagoon berm was left to provide an overlook and

in 2003 a trail was built. The total cost of the project, although under budget, was \$2.6 million or \$5-6,000 dollars per acre. The city bought the whole project, but the plan is to have developers buy-in as they go to cover their share of the watershed structures.

Thanks Lon for a great presentation and for making this a better place for birds and birders.

Attendees: John Bovey, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Rick Hollis, Ken Hunt, Paul and Lorraine Kent, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Khristen Lawton, Dick and Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Brenda Nations, Rosemarie Petzold, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Richard and Marcia Shaffer, Marybeth Slonneger, Wetherill Winder.

—Chris Caster

April 18, Night Sounds Foray. Rained out.

April 19, Otter Creek Marsh. Cancelled due to high water and poor weather.

April 20, Redbird Farms Wildlife Area. Beginning Birder Trip. The day started with overcast skies and a chilly 51F, and ended with a nice 65F with the sun coming out. Several birds were seen in the treetops which might have been the year's first Indigo Buntings, but even with scopes we could not make a positive ID.

Participants: Drew and Judy Dillman, Karen Disbrow (leader), Geri Dull, Tony Franken, Ken Hunt, Lauren and Doina Johnson, Jeanne Snyder.

Birds (30 species): Canada Goose, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, House Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow,

Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eye Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird.

– *Karen Disbrow*

April 27, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. It was unseasonably cool, but a nice spring morning to be out. The floodwaters were as high as I personally can remember, but I wasn't living here in '93. James Ave was passable for only the first half mile north of the Swan Lake Rd. The water was all the way up to the Sand Point parking area and the parking area near Half Moon Ave. Swan Lake Rd. was not passable west of Half Moon and Greencastle Ave. was underwater at the Gun Club Ponds.

So the birding conditions were somewhat unusual. In the flooded ditches along James Ave we could observe Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats. Solitary Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs could be seen in the flooded fields right along the road. We got to see our first-of-year House Wrens, catbirds, and Brown Thrashers. Yellow-rumps and kinglets were everywhere. Two Franklin's Gulls looked quite smart in their black caps and pinkish necks and breasts, and a beautiful gray Northern Harrier was great to see as well.

Swan Lake treated us to looks of two Horned Grebes in breeding plumage. Lots of other waterfowl were scattered across the lake. We found a Vesper Sparrow by the water's edge near Half Moon Ave. It looked like it didn't really know what to make of the situation. Maybe he'll follow the drawdown back to his home along the Babcock Rd.

A Northern Waterthrush was singing repeatedly from the flooded willows at the Gun Club Ponds, but we never could see it. There were nearly thirty Wood Ducks there as well. It looks like they could use some more boxes. Those were the highlights.

Participants: Bob and Dara Dick, Chris Caster (leader), Ken Hunt.

Species (56): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, American Coot, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, American Crow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, House Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Palm Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, House Sparrow.

–*Chris Caster*

May 17, W. Johnson County and Iowa County. A group of four in one car spent the better part of the morning tracking down 86 species of birds in the western portion of Johnson County, and the Amana area of Iowa County. This trip was substituted for the regularly scheduled outing to Hanging Rock, as the most direct route to that location was closed due to high water on the Amana Road.

Our outing began at James Avenue, continued to the Swan Lake area, and included Tom's Pond and grassland habitats of the western portion of the county. We concluded with the overflow water from the Iowa River south of Main Amana and finally visited the Lily Lake, where the best bird of the trip, a basic-plumaged Pacific Loon, was discovered. Other highlights were a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Black-throated Green Warbler along James Avenue, five mostly diving duck species, including Ring-necked Duck at Swan Lake, Wilson's Phalarope and Sora at Tom's Pond, grassland birds such as Bobolink, Dickcissel and Grasshopper Sparrow

in the western county, and Caspian, Black, and Forster's Terns along highway 151 south of Amana. The bird list was, however, surpassed by the absolutely gorgeous weather, so all-in-all it was a great day to be afield.

Participants: Karen Disbrow, Dave Kyllingstad, Ramona McGurk, Jim Fuller (leader).

Birds (86 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Pacific Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Egret, Green Heron, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Sora, American Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Forster's Tern, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Chipping Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– Jim Fuller



May 18, Muskrat Slough and Beam Woods.

It was a nice, sunny spring morning, with a somewhat cool north breeze. Our small group climbed into Ken's car and headed north on Highway 1.

Muskrat Slough is a shallow lake and marsh near Olin in Jones County. Our first stop there was at the boat ramp at the south end. There were a number of passerines around the parking area, including Yellow Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Brown Thrasher. We donned our boots and slogged out through the marsh about 50 yards to gain a better view of the open water. Along the way we encountered several Marsh Wrens. We heard and saw a male Yellow-headed Blackbird. Farther out we spotted several Black Terns, American White Pelicans, and a soaring Bald Eagle.

We then drove around to the north access and walked along the gravel road through the wooded area on the north side of the marsh. We were more protected from the north wind here and numerous songbirds were present. A Northern Waterthrush was singing along a small creek, and two White-crowned Sparrows popped up along the roadside. Our most surprising find was a rather late pair of Pine Siskins feeding in a small bush.

After a pit stop at Fairview, we headed to Beam Woods north of Stone City. Beam Woods is my family's property and I always enjoy showing it off to birders. My grandparents purchased it in 1963 and we've maintained it as a nature preserve since then. It consists of 37 acres of wooded ravines and limestone bluffs bordering Buffalo Creek.

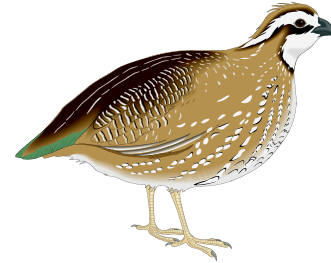
We hiked most of the trails, looking for birds and enjoying the spring wildflowers and other plants. There were a few migrants including Blue-headed Vireo, several Swainson's Thrushes, and Golden-winged, Nashville, Tennessee, and Black-and-white Warblers. Resident birds seen included Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, numerous American Redstarts, and Scarlet Tanager. But the best bird was a singing Yellow-throated Warbler, which was a new bird for my property list. After staring straight up into a pine grove for about five minutes, we all managed to get a good look at the bird.

Participants: Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards (leader), Ken Hunt.

Birds (74 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Marsh Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-

headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– Chris Edwards



May 21, Meeting. Nicki Nagl is from Carroll and went to school in Ames for Animal Ecology. She is currently an Americorps volunteer working with the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program in Boone and serves as the coordinator for the new Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Project co-sponsored by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union and DNR.

The original BBA Project was completed in 1995. It attempted to survey 861 3x3 mile square blocks across the state. The project used a combination of standard blocks placed systematically across the state in a grid and priority blocks chosen on the basis of their unique features. Approximately 70% was surveyed and 199 species were recorded.

The new BBA Project is being undertaken because the habitat is always changing. Over the last twenty years the state has increased grassland and wetland habitats, as well as urbanization. The goals of the project are 1) to arrive at a new baseline for future comparisons 2) evaluate habitat availability—something not done in the previous project and 3) update the catalog of breeding species.

The current project runs from 2008 through 2012. It will sample 791 3x3 mile blocks—395 of these will be standard blocks using the systematic grid previously established. The remaining 396 habitat blocks were randomly selected from public lands to represent aquatic, forested, and grassland habitats in proportion to their availability across the state as determined

by current Geographic Information System (GIS) land cover data. These habitat blocks were also evenly divided between the north and south halves of Iowa. The Steering Committee consisting of Stephen Dinsmore (Chair), Chris Caster, Bruce Ehresman, Jay Gilliam, Doug Harr, Ann Johnson, Karen Kinkead, Nicki Nagl, and Karen Viste-Sparkman worked extremely hard to devise a block selection protocol that would be random, yet representative. Unfortunately the block selections have been controversial, as many of the locations special to us did not get picked up in the random sample.

Atlasing is easy and anyone can do it—you don't have to be especially adept. You also do not need to be an IOU member, but you do need access to the IOU website. There you will create your BBA account, choose a block to work, and print off maps. Nicki provided us with field cards for recording data, but these aren't absolutely necessary. To report your data go to <http://bba.iowabirds.org> You will be asked to report on which block you surveyed and how much time you spent. Drive-by sightings should be recorded as 0.1 hours. You don't have to count numbers of birds, simply record the level of breeding for each species observed. The levels are observed, possible, probable, and confirmed, and the evidence criteria are on the website. Once a particular species has been confirmed in a block there is nothing more to do with that species in that block for the rest of the project. However if a species has only probable status, then there is still a chance to upgrade the level if more evidence of breeding is found. You can view the status of each block and the birds recorded by other observers as well. It is certainly interesting to view the progress.

There are 7 habitat blocks and 6 grid blocks in Johnson County alone and many encompass areas you already visit. Much of the HWA, Lake Macbride, and the Coralville Reservoir are included in blocks, however I have found that it can be tricky to know just which block you are in around the Coralville Reservoir as none of the roads run straight. You will also need to study the block boundaries carefully as some local hot

spots are not included in any survey block. Here is a partial list of locations I have identified to avoid in your survey work:

- Hawkeye Wildlife Area east of James Ave. is not included.
- Only the north shore of Swan Lake is included. Most of Swan Lake including the south shore is not.
- Much of Macbride Nature-Recreation Area including the Wolf campsites is not in a block.
- The northern part of Squire Point is included, but the southern part is not.
- Hickory Hill Park and Waterworks Park in Iowa City are not included.
- Most of F. W. Kent Park is in a block, but the northernmost portion is not.
- South Sycamore Bottoms, Sand Lake, Redbird Farms, and Frytown Conservation Area are not included in any blocks

The success of the project will depend on the participation of many birders. The goal is to have a minimum of 20 hours coverage in each of the 791 blocks. Even spread over five years this is a lot of time, but a little bit here and there starts to add up. The good news is that there is always a block near you. Thanks Nicki for driving so far to brief us on the new atlas project.

Attendees: Jeanne Bonde, Norlin Boyd, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Ed Folk, Bruce Gardner, Therese Guedon, Rick Hollis, Ken Hunt, Paul and Lorraine Kent, Dave Kyllingstad, Ken Lowder, John and Darlyne Neff, Rosemarie Petzold, Carol Winter

—Chris Caster

June 7, Indian Creek Nature Center. On the morning of our outing in Cedar Rapids we found Indian Creek over its banks around the nature center. There was no access there to the Sac and Fox Trail or to the nature center's greenbelt trails. So instead we birded our way down Otis Road to the wetlands area, and then back through the prairie/woods area NW of the nature center.

Weather was somewhat oppressive for early June. Morning highs were already in the low to mid 80s with high humidity. Skies were partly cloudy and luckily we had a bit of wind to help cool us off and keep the gnats from being too bothersome.

Birds found were all regularly occurring summer species for our area. Highlights were a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, watching an Eastern Kingbird take food to a nest, a singing Yellow Warbler, and Lark Sparrows. A curious (or perhaps irritated) Field Sparrow followed us around – I think he/she was trying to tell us to leave its area alone! We had one unidentified *empid* (either Willow or Alder Flycatcher).

Participants: Jonni Ellsworth, Therese Guedon, Diana Pesek (leader).

Birds (34): Canada Goose, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, *Empidonax* sp., Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Field Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Diana Pesek*

June 14, Townsend Woods. Cancelled due to the widespread flooding throughout Eastern Iowa. This has been a tough year weather-wise for birding. Many of our trips have been postponed or were canceled completely. I want to thank everyone for their assistance in setting up these trips. Hopefully next season will be better. The important thing is to continue to explore new areas and have fun birding.

– *Karen Disbrow*

June 21, Indiagrass Hills. The nine birders who went on the annual ICBC outing to Indiagrass Hills in Iowa County were once again treated to fantastic weather. It was in the 60s by the time we arrived around 8 a.m. with few clouds.

Right off the bat it was evident that Bobolink numbers were down from last year. Normally, 8-10 are seen at the beginning of the trail that heads east, but only a couple of singing males were around. It's possible they were just scattered this year. A few were seen on our way in along 240th St. On the brighter side was the number of sparrows. Field Sparrows were quite abundant. About half a dozen Grasshopper Sparrows were heard and a couple allowed good looks. Henslow's Sparrows were well represented. At least 8 were heard and two were seen very well. A few of the area specialties were missed, including Black-billed Cuckoo, Northern Mockingbird, and Orchard Oriole, but these birds are rather hit and miss, and there's no reason to suspect that they're not around. The only real surprise sighting occurred outside of the property, when we spotted a Eurasian Collared-Dove at a residence at the intersection of L Ave. and 240th St.

Temperatures warmed to the mid 70s by the time the group was leaving at around 11:30. We ran into one of the property owners, Judy Felder. After introducing ourselves and giving her the highlights, she mentioned how many new birders there were this year, which is excellent. In fact, one of the members, Judy Ellyson, needed several of the Midwest grassland specialties for lifers, including Dickcissel, Sedge Wren, Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows, so that made for a very successful outing.

Participants: Mark Brown (leader), John Broz, John Donelson, Judy Ellyson, Tony Franken, Therese Guedon, Ken Hunt, Karl Kahler, Don Swartzendruber.

Birds (46 species): Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, Ring-necked

Pheasant, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Chimney Swift, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Willow Flycatcher, American Robin, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Bobolink, Dickcissel, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Towhee, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

Butterflies (16 species): Black Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Coral Hairstreak, Spring Azure, Great Spangled Fritillary, Meadow Fritillary, American Lady, Painted Lady, Monarch, Little Wood Satyr, Northern Pearly-eye, European Skipper, Least Skipper, Little Glassywing, Hobomok Skipper, Delaware Skipper.

– Mark Brown

July 13, Backyard Habitat Crawl. No one showed up so I opted not to go alone. I want to thank Bob and Dara Dick, Ken and Mary Lowder, and Jim and Joyce Durbin for agreeing to let us view their gardens and wildlife observation areas. I may look at doing this type of trip earlier in the summer if there is any interest.

– Karen Disbrow

Note: additional summer field trip reports will appear in the next issue.

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The club web site is maintained by Jim Scheib and is located at icbirds.org.

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Chris Edwards, Editor
4490 Daniels Cir. NE
Solon, IA 52333

