
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

December 2021 • Volume 41 Number 3

Schedule

Field Trips are free and open to the public. Trips may be cancelled due to inclement weather or flooding and will be announced on our Facebook page and by email notification to club members. **Meetings** are currently being held via Zoom due to the pandemic. For more information or questions email iowacitybc@gmail.com.

December 19, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Join us for this holiday tradition—the world’s longest running citizen science project! To participate, contact Chris Edwards at credwards@aol.com or (319) 430-4732 by Sunday, December 12. See page 2 for more information.

January 15, Saturday, 9 a.m. Tailwater Riverwalk Trail for Bald Eagles, gulls, and winter residents with leader Elizabeth Aubrey. This ¼-mile paved, accessible trail below the Coralville Dam offers multiple habitats including river, woodland edge, and wet forest bottomland. It’s one of our best spots for viewing large congregations of wintering Bald Eagles. Be prepared to hike in cold temps and on a trail that is NOT cleared of snow. Length of hike will be determined by weather, but no longer than two hours. Meet at the south end of the parking row at the Devonian Fossil Gorge, 2850 Prairie Drive, Iowa City.

February 5, Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Samuel L. Kirkwood Bald Eagle Watch at the Coralville roller dam walkway next to Iowa River Power Restaurant. The ICBC will provide spotting scopes and help attendees spot eagles and other wildlife. To help, call or text Karen Disbrow at (319) 430-0315.

February 6, Sunday, 1–3 p.m. Iowa City Freeze Fest at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area. A family-friendly outdoor exploration event that includes games, winter hiking, survival skill building, crafts, and bird watching. And weather permitting, snowshoeing and ice fishing. Marshmallow roasting and hot chocolate will be available. The ICBC will staff spotting scopes for attendees. To help, call or text Karen Disbrow at (319) 430-0315.

February 13, Sunday, 8 a.m. Quad Cities and Mississippi River for gulls, waterfowl, and other winter birds with leader Chris Caster. We’ll stop at locks and dams, riverside parks, and other hotspots like Fairmount Cemetery for winter finches. Walking is usually short-distance from frequent stops. We’ll stop for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Return time is late afternoon. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. Meet at the Hy-Vee parking lot, 1125 N Dodge St., Iowa City. Carpooling is optional and only for those vaccinated for COVID.

February 17, Thursday, 7 p.m. Zoom Meeting. Club member Mark Brown will present “Wildlife of Pawnee National Grasslands.” This landscape on the Eastern Plains of Colorado is home to many shortgrass prairie specialties. Mark visited the area in 2021.

Continued on next page →

Schedule (continued)

March 5, Saturday, 8 a.m. Cone Marsh in Louisa County for Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and migrating waterfowl with leader Linda Rudolph. A local favorite not to be missed at this time of year! We'll stop at several points around the marsh and take a walk on the dike, returning by noon. Dress for cold, wind, and wet or muddy trails, and bring a scope if possible. Meet at the Fin & Feather parking lot, 125 Hwy. 1 W in Iowa City. Carpooling is optional and only for those vaccinated for COVID.

March 17, Thursday, 7 p.m. Zoom Meeting. Karl Jungbluth, birder and retired meteorologist with the National Weather Service, will present "Weather, Radar, and Birds." He will discuss websites that provide insight into bird migration.

March 26, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Burlington Area and Mississippi River for spring waterfowl migration. Target birds include ducks, geese, pelicans, Winter Wren, and many more. This is an all-day trip led by Burlington local expert birder Chuck Fuller, with stops at locks and dams, riverside parks, and other hotspots. Walking is usually short distance from frequent stops. We'll stop for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a scope if possible. Meet Karen Disbrow at 6:30 a.m. at the Fin & Feather parking lot, 125 Hwy. 1 W in Iowa City; or at 8 a.m. at the Port of Burlington, 400 Front St., Burlington. Carpooling is optional and only for those vaccinated for COVID.

Other Dates of Note

January 21–24, Friday–Monday. Minnesota Avian Adventure. Carroll County Conservation Board is again organizing a winter birding trip to northern Minnesota. A comfortable coach bus will take you to the world-famous Sax-Zim Bog and other areas to look for northern specialties including Great Gray Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, Snowy Owl, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing, Canada Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, three species of grouse, crossbills, and more. For more information, contact Matt Wetrich at matt@carrollcountyiowa.org.

Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 19

This year's Iowa City Christmas Bird Count will be held Sunday, December 19. As always, we need participants in the field as well as feeder watchers who live in the count circle. The circle includes most of the Coralville Reservoir, Lake Macbride, Solon, North Liberty, Tiffin, Coralville, and the northwest portion of Iowa City.

This year we will try to accommodate both birders who would like to bird in a small group with a leader, and birders who prefer to bird alone or with family members only. If you bird alone, you will be assigned a small area to cover.

We will hold an optional noon meeting at the North Liberty Community Center for a mid-day compilation. Bring your own lunch. Masks are required in the Community Center except when you are eating. This year we will not have an evening meal or compilation.

All participants who bird in groups or attend the noon meeting must be fully vaccinated, with or without a booster shot. Vaccination status will be on the honor system.

To participate, contact Chris Edwards by email at credwards@aol.com or phone at (319) 430-4732 by Sunday, December 12. Let Chris know if you want to participate in the field or as a feeder watcher; and if in the field, whether you would like to bird in a small group or bird alone.

Louisa County CBC

Louisa County Conservation has invited birders to help with their Christmas Bird Count on Thursday, December 16. All experience levels are welcome!

The center point is just north of Columbus Junction and the circle includes towns, woodlands, prairies, and farmland, including the Nature Conservancy Maytag Access along the Cedar River, Cone Marsh, Eden Prairie, Chinkapin Bluffs, and Cairo Woods. There are five routes within the circle to choose from. If you are interested in being a route leader or participant, please contact Laura Semken at 319-523-8381 or lsemken@louisacountyia.gov.

Iowa Audubon Corner

The December Newsletter of Iowa Audubon is now available online at www.iaaudubon.org. It includes an interesting article on the old 4-H Camp, also known as Clover Woods Camp and Retreat, which Iowa Audubon recently helped purchase and conserve. Doug Harr and Karl Jungbluth have been birding the area for the past two seasons to update and increase the bird list for the area.

Grant applications will be available on the website in December. The Board will meet in March to review the applications and choose recipients.

Iowa Audubon is dedicated to the conservation of natural areas that benefit birds in Iowa. You can join for \$15 per year for individuals, or \$20 per year for families. It is money well-spent and aids conservation right here in Iowa! Do you want to sponsor a grant for a part of the State? This is the organization that can make it happen.

– Karen Disbrow

Time to Renew Your Membership

It's time to send in your membership dues for 2022. Our annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription, \$10 for an email subscription, or \$10 for students for a print or email subscription. Your dues help support our publications, events, and volunteer activities. Members also receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at Dodge St. Ace Hardware and Forever Green Garden Center. Check your mailing label or contact Treasurer Larry Mahoney at ltjmahoney@aol.com for the year you have paid through. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" to Larry Mahoney, 2223 Cae Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246. Or go to our website and use your PayPal account to pay.

Club Announcements

Meetings: Due to the ongoing pandemic, all our meetings will be held virtually on Zoom until at least spring 2022. At that time, we will reassess if and when to resume in-person meetings.

Meeting Recordings: Our Zoom meetings are now being recorded for on-demand viewing. If you miss a meeting, you can stream it on our website by going to the "Videos" link in the menu at the top right of the homepage which will take you to the recordings.

Spotting Scope Checkout: The club now has two spotting scopes available for one-week checkout by members. Birders new to scope use can practice a new level of birding—scopes are especially helpful for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds. Contact-free pickup is available from Linda Quinn's home on the east side of Iowa City. Arrange your checkout by contacting Linda at quinnhenry@msn.com or (319) 330-3328.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

August 14, Lake Macbride Picnic Potluck.

Our club picnic was held under a park shelter near the north arm of Lake Macbride. The weather had cooled off nicely and our gathering of birders had a lovely time with good food and conversation. Topics of conversation included recent bird sightings, upcoming field trips, and favorite birding spots. And we even had time for some birding!

Participants: Phyllis Black, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Doina Johnson, Terri Macey, Linda Quinn.

Birds (20 species): Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull, American White Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, Baltimore Oriole, Northern Cardinal.

– *Linda Quinn*

August 22, Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area.

For better or worse, we threw COVID to the wind today. Last year our August shorebird outing was canceled. This year we shared scopes like there was no tomorrow and nary a mask. Hopefully it worked out for everyone.

We met at the parking lot near Swan Lake. The water was getting low and parts were thick with duck weed. There wasn't much activity, but Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets were working the far shore.

We soon carpooled to Greencastle Avenue, where the best shorebirds had been seen recently. The air was fragrant with the smell of rotting carp. And a few Turkey Vultures were taking advantage. For us, there was a modest number of shorebirds present with just enough variety to keep

everyone interested. Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, and Semipalmated Sandpipers dominated. A lone Greater Yellowlegs made a close appearance for comparison. There was even a leucistic Semipalmated Sandpiper that at first glance resembled a Sanderling. A Short-billed Dowitcher and a boldly-patterned Wilson's Snipe were in the mix. At least two Wilson's Phalaropes were about, and a juvenile Red-necked Phalarope was with them when we first arrived. We were impressed with the number of Stilt Sandpipers. A Sora made a brief appearance nearby. A Northern Waterthrush, our only warbler, was viewed at length as it foraged along a near shore with Red-winged Blackbirds and Spotted Sandpipers. Finally, around 10 a.m. the resident family of Black-necked Stilts arrived. That made the morning, as many participants had come out just to see those birds. Throw in a smattering of Pectoral Sandpipers and Semipalmated Plovers, a few Mallards and Ring-billed Gulls, lone cormorant and Caspian Tern flyovers, and that rounds out our waterside birding experience.

Greencastle produced a couple more good birds just south of the dry Gun Club Ponds. A Blue Grosbeak responded to a recording. It sang repeatedly from a couple of different trees, but I don't know if anyone was able to get a good look at it. They can be awfully hard to find amongst the cottonwood leaves even when you know they're there. Ironically, because they can also require a good deal of patience, a Bell's Vireo pair was more cooperative for a few of us in a nearby dogwood thicket.

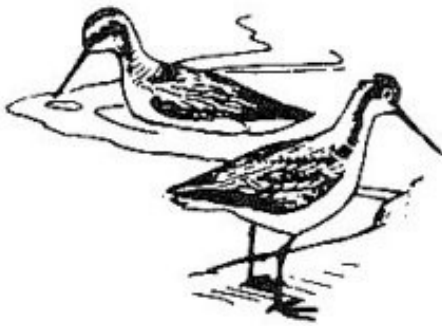
It was certainly great to be out with the group. Never regret anything that makes you smile.

Participants: Elizabeth Aubrey, Phyllis Black, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Chris Caster (leader), Jerry Denning, Ray Hamilton, James Huntington, Mark Madsen, Cheryl Miller, Jason Paulios, Linda Quinn, Janet Seiz, Sharon Somers.

Birds (41 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated

Hummingbird, Sora, Black-necked Stilt, Killdeer, Semipalmated Plover, Stilt Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Bank Swallow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Waterthrush, Blue Grosbeak.

– *Chris Caster*



September 12, Pelican Festival at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area. It was a beautiful day with sunshine and warm temperatures. After two years without a festival, this year's event drew approximately 100 attendees plus 21 exhibitors and speakers. This was short of our typical attendance of 300, but a good showing all in all.

During the event, about 250 American White Pelicans were seen flying overhead in groups of 25 to 100. With the drought this year, the water level was low, and willows and other tall vegetation prevented us from viewing the water. At the end of the day a group of ten Double-crested Cormorants were seen flying over the site.

The presentations were well-attended, oftentimes with the chairs full and additional people standing. Joan Schnabel of Raptology brought two live birds, a Peregrine Falcon and a Merlin. Andria Cossolotto of the Indian Creek Nature Center spoke about Monarchs. Neil Bernstein, Professor Emeritus at Mount Mercy College, brought an Ornate Box Turtle for his talk on that species. And Doug Harr of Iowa Audubon spoke about American White Pelicans.

Several groups brought activities and information to the delight of those attending. Exhibitors included Cedar County Conservation, Eastern Central Iowa Beekeepers Association, Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Prairie States Mushroom Club, Sierra Club, Iowa Audubon, and of course the Iowa City Bird Club. Additionally, the Iowa Native Plant Society and Iowa Master Naturalists sent information about their activities to hand out. Audubon clubs represented included Francis Moore, Waterloo; Joe Tollari, Dubuque; and Leland Freie, Cedar Rapids.

Special thanks to Cedar Rapids Audubon Society for financial assistance; Steve Woodruff, Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist for setup and assistance; Lois Hughes & Merle Inhe for bringing coolers, ice, and water; Ben Rowold for getting signs out and helping setup; and Funny Face Designs by Lori for painting all those faces! And thanks to all the other members of the Iowa City Bird Club and Iowa Master Naturalists who helped setup, tear-down, and monitor spotting scopes.

Next year's Pelican Festival is scheduled for Sunday, September 11. See you then!

– *Karen Disbrow*

September 16, Meeting. Our speaker was Jon Stravers. Jon is a birder, photographer, and Audubon researcher. He presented a very informative talk titled "Chasing the Bird Dream." His talk included updates and great photos on his Cerulean Warbler and Red-shouldered Hawk research. Yellow River State Forest might be a great place to check out in May if you are looking for Cerulean Warblers!

Following Jon's main presentation, we saw some of Milana Mitchell's artwork. Then Jon shared his two-years-in-the-making stone art!

We shared the new way to view past meetings on the Iowa City Bird Club's web page – it's now very easy to find from the video tab at the top of the page, and no passcode is required!

Linda Quinn announced upcoming field trips.

There were 22 participants attending the Zoom meeting.

– *Sandy Eads*

September 26, Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve. We had a great turnout for our annual hawk watch at Stainbrook Preserve, overlooking the Mehaffey Bridge area of the Coralville Reservoir. It was a pleasant day on the hill, with mostly sunny skies and temperatures rising from the low 70s to low 80s. But strong southwest winds prevented a good hawk flight.

We saw a nice variety of raptor species, but all in relatively low numbers. As expected, Turkey Vultures were most numerous. Highlights were a Peregrine Falcon that flew by high and fast, three Ospreys, and several Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Broad-winged Hawks.

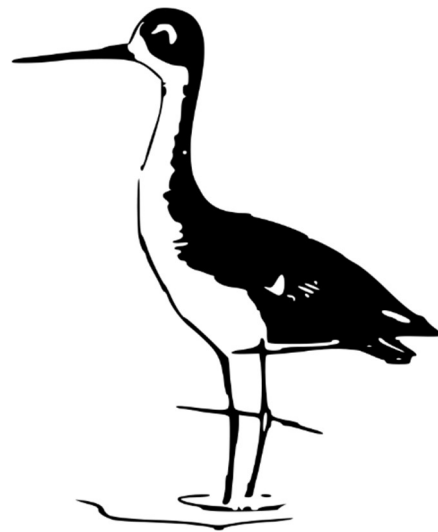
During the lulls in raptor-watching, we kept ourselves occupied with conversation and with sightings of other species such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, distant flocks of Franklin's Gulls and pelicans, and hundreds of swallows. And we enjoyed finding a ladies' tresses orchid amongst the tall grass.

Participants: Janet, Paul, and Miles Abbas, Elizabeth Aubrey, Darlene Bergren, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Charlotte Fairlie, Patti and Ray Hamilton, James Huntington, Cheryl Miller, Diana and Larry Pesek, Deb and Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, Janet Seiz, Tom Walls, Eliza Willis.

Raptors (8 species, 40 individuals): Turkey Vulture 17, Osprey 3, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 2, *Accipiter* sp. 1, Bald Eagle 4, Broad-winged Hawk 3, Red-tailed Hawk 6, *Buteo* sp. 1, Peregrine Falcon 1.

Other Birds (22 species): Canada Goose, Rock Pigeon, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Yellow-rumped Warbler.

– *Chris Edwards*



October 10, The Big Sit. This year's Big Sit, held at the Sugar Bottom Recreation Area, was a big success! We had 13 birders in attendance, from old hands to brand new birders. One of the folks new to birding was surprised and edified to learn there was more than one type of gull! The day was cool and damp, with a couple of brief light rain showers, but the Bird Club provided coffee and donuts to keep everyone warm and well fed.

From our viewpoint within a 17-foot-diameter circle, from 7 a.m. until noon, we saw 32 species. Everyone seemed to have a good time in spite of the cool and damp weather (we birders are

nothing if not intrepid) and we look forward to hosting next year's Big Sit with an even bigger turnout!

Participants: Barry Buschelman, Jerry Denning, Chris Edwards, Therese Guedon, James Huntington, Pat Keifer, Terri Macey, Alison Merrill, Linda Quinn, Allison Rogers, Jenifer Rogers, Sharon Somers, Wanda Thackery.

Birds (32 species): Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Killdeer, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, America Crow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, European Starling, House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Yellow-rumped Warbler.

– Terri Macey

October 20, Kent Park Bird Walk. It was a lovely morning. There were still a bit of flowers blooming – tiny flowers on big plants. The fall colors were looking nice. There is a sugar maple on the path down to the fish pond that was gorgeous. But the birding was hard. Very few birds were out in the open. The most numerous species was White-throated Sparrow, and very few of them were ever visible.

Participants: Rick Hollis, Jenny Miller, Kim Pagel.

Birds (18 species): Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

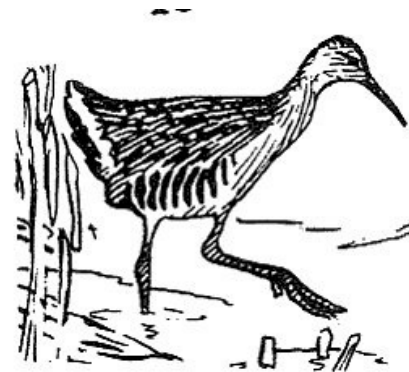
– Rick Hollis

October 21, Meeting. Our Zoom meeting began with a presentation from Ryan and Holly Anthony, new Director and Assistant Director of the Iowa Raptor Project. They explained their plans for the project, which include upgrading the physical facilities for the raptors, conducting research, and other goals.

Linda Quinn gave us an update on upcoming field trips and the Christmas Bird Count. Sandy Eads shared a few photos from the successful pelican rescue at Cedar River Crossing on October 21. Jerry Denning shared his success in finding LeConte's Sparrows at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area. Diana Pesek spotted them and James Huntington also saw them. They had no luck finding a Northern Shrike, but the next day Jamie McCoy did see one there.

Fourteen computers attended this meeting.

– Sandy Eads



October 23, Cedar River Crossing Conservation Area. The morning greeted us with dense fog over the Cedar River valley on this cool fall morning, with temperatures just above freezing. Fourteen birders joined the first club field trip to Cedar River Crossing, a relatively new Johnson County conservation area. It was the first visit here for six members of the group. We took our time getting started in order to give people extra time to arrive, as the turn into the Cedar River Crossing North Access can be easy to miss, more so with the limited visibility. Many of us wore blaze orange gear, since hunting is allowed on the property. We didn't see or hear any hunters during the trip however.

We decided to start out on the historic Sutliff Bridge, figuring that if anyone else showed up they would be able to join the group before heading into the north part of the conservation area. Visibility was poor, due to the thick fog, but we were able to spot Wilson's Snipe and a Greater Yellowlegs, as well as numerous Killdeer on the river's sandbars. Killdeer are often seen here in good numbers. The bridge is also a reliable spot for Rock Pigeons.

After checking out the rest of the river area, we ventured into the wetland. We soon met up with two birders walking towards us. It turns out they arrived while the rest of the group was on the bridge but weren't able to see or hear us. We hadn't noticed their arrival either. As the group continued south along the main dirt road, the fog started to lift, along with spirits, and we encountered a good variety of sparrows and finches near the back channels of the Cedar River. We got great looks and opportunities to compare Savannah, Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows. The Lincoln's Sparrow was a lifer for both Charlotte and Maria. We were also treated to a flyover by a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a life bird for Nick. A lone Purple Finch was later spotted, the first reported for this area on eBird (Cedar River Crossing—North Access eBird hotspot).

The highlight of the trip turned out to be extended, close-up views of LeConte's Sparrows. On the previous morning's scouting trip, Deb and I got very brief views of a group of "yellowish" sparrows that we suspected might be LeConte's, or maybe even Nelson's. The group focused efforts in an attempt to try and find them before we had to turn back. Our efforts were eventually rewarded. James Huntington was the first to make the LeConte's identification and we quickly got everyone on them, ultimately counting nine in total! The sparrows were sitting on the tall grasses and brush just off the mowed grass trail. What a sight to behold as the two groups spent several minutes entranced with the other. The nine LeConte's Sparrows with their beautiful yellow-buff faces and purplish napes versus the fourteen birders clad in their blaze

orange attire. The LeConte's was a life bird for at least five birders!

One notable species missing was an American White Pelican that had been around for the last month or so. A few days before the trip, a successful rescue operation of the injured, juvenile pelican was conducted by Johnson County Conservation employees, volunteers from Bur Oak Land Trust, and our own Sandy Eads!

To cap off the morning, Frances Owen, a Naturalist with the Johnson County Conservation Board, provided us with a presentation detailing the 560-acre property comprised of wetland, riparian forest, upland oak savanna, and both relic and restored prairie. Frances discussed the history of the property, including the origin of the name which was chosen to honor the historic river fording area located on the site that was used by both Native Americans and Euro-American colonizers. Frances detailed the restoration work that has been completed and discussed plans for future projects. While the area is currently quite primitive, there will be modern touches added in the near future, including signage and restrooms. Francis also pointed out some of the special features of Cedar River Crossing, including an earthen astronomical clock that was constructed. Two members of our group undertook an adventure to see the clock for themselves.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Sandy Eads, Charlotte Fairlie, James Huntington, Michelle Lewis, Cheryl Miller, Jason Paulios, Linda Quinn, Deb and Mark Rolfes (leaders), Sharon Somers, Maria Story, Nick Timmer.

Birds (45 Species): Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted

Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal.

– *Deb and Mark Rolfes*

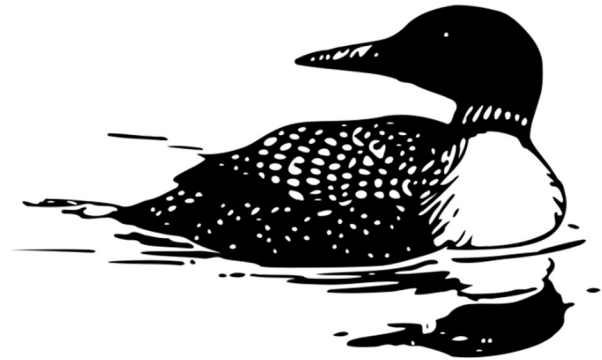
November 6, Belgum Grove. Twelve birders hiked the Bur Oak Land Trust's Belgum Grove property looking for sparrows and whatever else would show up. Unfortunately, a week of frosts seemed to have pushed out the hordes of sparrow migrants seen a few weeks earlier on the Cedar River Crossing field trip. Instead, we spent a lot of time speculating on prairie plant identifications based on seed heads, and chatting about what might normally be expected if I had timed the trip better. There was a pheasant hunter in a nearby field and a fisherman on the pond before we arrived, so we'll blame the low species count on them.

It was still great to get out and experience this property. We ended the day with only 16 species and most were seen flying overhead or heard only. We hiked every available bit of the property, enjoyed the neatly mown broad paths, ending just short of two miles. The stream mitigation project is still ongoing and we discovered potential hikers will need sturdy legs for a short jump over the water or a good pair of calf-high boots. Several new birders joined us and got to see some common birds well in the scope as well as learn about the newly arrived Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree Sparrow.

Participants: Phyllis Black, Charlotte Fairlie, Peter Hansen, James Huntington, Michele Lewis, Jason Paulios (leader), Diana Pesek, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Maria Story, Danny Tallon, Naomi Vather.

Birds (16 species): Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird, American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal.

– *Jason Paulios*



November 7, Lake Red Rock. The weather forecast for the first weekend in November was for mild temperatures in the mid- to upper 60s, which was just too irresistible not to go birding. So we offered a “popup” outing to either Lake Red Rock in Marion County or Saylorville Lake in Polk County to look for migrating waterfowl. Frequent checks of local waters during the previous week had produced few migrating waterfowl species, and the birds appeared to be concentrated on the large reservoirs. When the group met early Sunday morning, the consensus was Lake Red Rock, so off we went. Reports from Lake Red Rock the previous day had included Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe, so we were hoping to find some unusual waterfowl on the lake.

Our first stop upon arriving at the reservoir around 9:30 a.m. was the cemetery overlook off of Hempstead Avenue. There was a large raft of ducks—a couple of thousand at least—visible from the viewing point by the cemetery, and we started the day by scoping through and enjoying the variety of duck species there. Good lighting and a higher elevation looking down on the lake

made identifying the ducks fairly easy, even though they were out a little way. Eighty to ninety percent turned out to be Mallards. A couple of Common Loons and a few Horned Grebes were in the area also, plus Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls, pelicans, cormorants, and coots. Alas, we did not find either of the two uncommon species reported from the day before.

We next headed toward the dam and were just about to start checking that area out when we received an update that the Red-throated Loon was still present and had been seen from the marina. So we backtracked and headed to the north side of the lake and the marina, where we scoped numerous Common Loons but could not locate the Red-throated Loon. We continued on to the western end of the lake and scoped again from the boat ramp parking area (site of the Ross's Gull from a few years ago) but still could not find anything but the common waterfowl we had been seeing all morning.

A bit downcast at missing the "rare" loon, we headed into Pella to grab some lunch, then had a leisurely picnic behind the visitor's center, immensely enjoying the beautiful fall scenery, weather, and interesting conversation.

Then it was on to Whitebreast Recreation Area on the southwest side of the lake for more birding. At the Whitebreast boat ramp, there were multiple Common Loons within scoping range so we renewed our search for the elusive Red-throated Loon. Finally, eagle-eyed James Huntington found it toward the distant shore. It almost looked like a gull sitting on the water because it showed so much more white than the Common Loons. Thanks to James' excellent description of where he was seeing the loon, we all were able to orient our scopes on it, confirming the upturned bill and head as well as the different patterning compared to the Common Loons. Success and a life bird for some in our group!

We then headed to Whitebreast Point, where unfortunately waterfowl were scarce. While there we received word a Pacific Loon had been

spotted earlier in the day from the Whitebreast boat ramp where we had just been. So back we went to the boat ramp. But no success this time around. Despite looking again through all of the loons we had previously scoped from the boat ramp, we could not turn any of them into a Pacific Loon, so who knows where that loon had moved off to. Lake Red Rock is huge, after all.

All in all, it was an excellent November day to be out birding and, for some, a chance to explore an area they had not been to before.

Participants: Phyllis Black, Sandy Eads, James Huntington (co-leader), Diana Pesek (co-leader), Allison Rogers, John Rogers, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes.

Birds seen at Lake Red Rock (34 species): Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Horned Grebe, American Coot, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow.

Additional birds seen while traveling to and from Lake Red Rock (6 species): Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Red-winged Blackbird.

– Diana Pesek



November 18, Meeting. Our speaker was Everly Eldeen, who presented “Banding in the Tropics: Two Months at the Center of the Earth.” She showed great photos of a variety of the tropical birds she saw while in Ecuador, and explained the fragile relationship between those birds and the unique habitat surrounding them. Everly is originally from Iowa City and is currently a sophomore studying Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Fourteen computers attended this Zoom meeting.

The next bird club meeting will be held in February 2022, as there will be no meetings in December and January.

The Iowa City Christmas Bird Count will be held Sunday, December 19. This year we will try to accommodate both birders who would like to bird in a small group with a leader, and birders who prefer to bird alone or with family members only. If you bird alone, you will be assigned a

small area to cover. As in past years, we will hold an optional noon meeting at the North Liberty Community Center for a mid-day compilation. You may bring your own lunch. Masks are required in the Community Center except when you are eating. This year we will not have an evening meal or compilation. All participants who bird in groups, and those attending the noon meeting, must be fully vaccinated, with or without a booster shot. Vaccination status will be on the honor system. If you would like to participate, please contact Chris Edwards by email at credwards@aol.com or call 319-430-4732 The sign-up deadline is Sunday, December 12.

Karen Disbrow let us know she has speakers planned for the February and March meetings, and reported on the eagle watch event to be held Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022 at the Iowa River Power Restaurant parking lot.

– Sandy Eads

IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please send this form with your annual membership dues to Larry Mahoney, 2223 Cae Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246. Annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription, \$10 for an email subscription, or \$10 for students for a print subscription. Make checks payable to “Eastern Iowa Birdwatch”. Members receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at Ace Hardware at 600 N. Dodge Street, Iowa City, and Forever Green Garden Center at 125 Forevergreen Rd., Coralville.

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Iowa City Bird Club

www.iowacitybirdclub.org

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Visit our web site at www.iowacitybirdclub.org. You may contact Webmaster Mark Graber at markagraber@gmail.com. Also visit Iowa City Bird Club on Facebook.

Join our Google Group to receive email announcements of upcoming meetings, field trips, and other events, and the email version of our newsletter. Email Linda Quinn at quinnhenry@msn.com to sign up.

For general club information, contact Rick Hollis at 319-665-3141 or xiboia@earthlink.net.

To lead or suggest a field trip, contact Field Trip Coordinator Linda Quinn at 319-330-3328 or quinnhenry@msn.com.

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